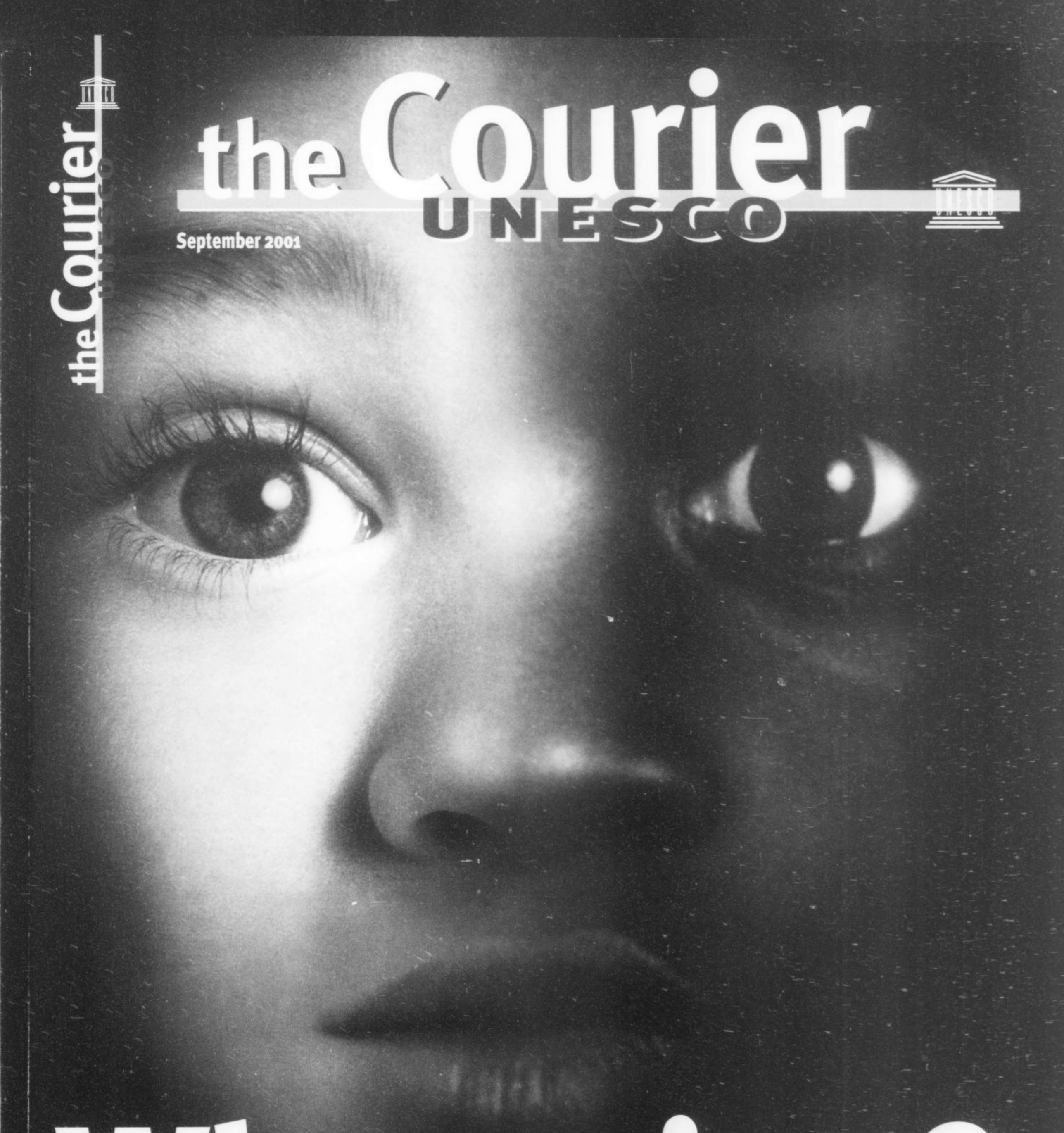
the Courier UNESCO

September 2001



Why racism?

Children as cannon fodder in 41 countries

Can GMOs feed a hungry world?

The advent of "intangible heritage"

Adam Michnik: the Sisyphus of democracy

Canada: $4.65 Can, United Kingdom: £2.5, USA: $4.25

M 1205 - 20 - 22,00 F

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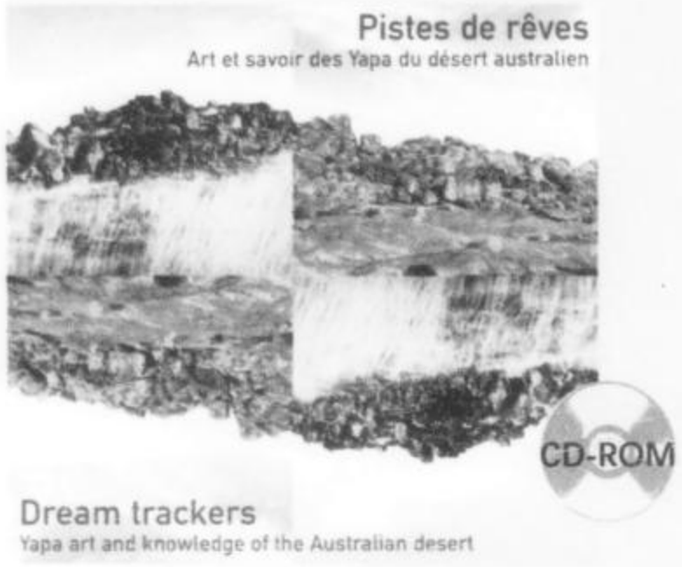

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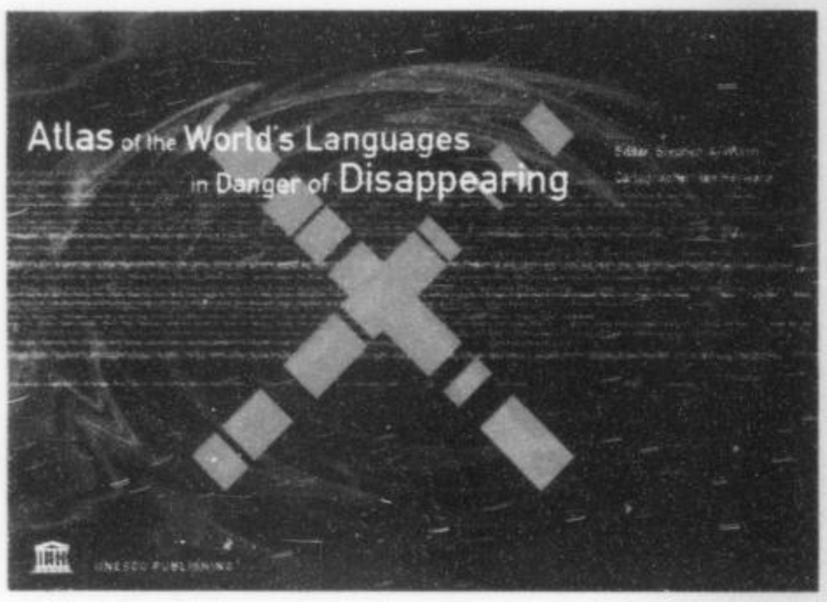

Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing
New enlarged and updated edition
By Stephen A. Wurm
Cartographer, Ian Heyward

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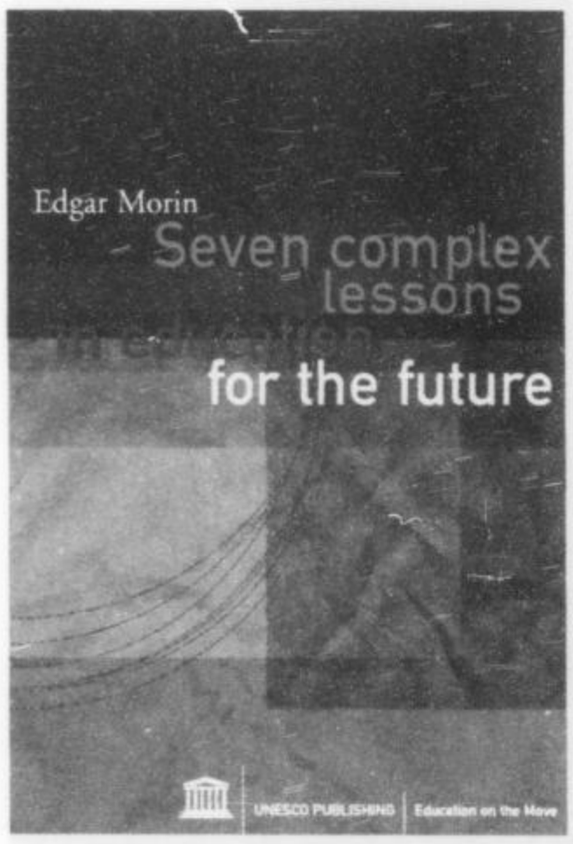

Seven Complex Lessons in Education for the Future
By Edgar Morin

■ Some fundamental problems are overlooked or neglected in education. These problems, presented as 'seven complex lessons', should be covered in all culture, according to means and rules appropriate to those societies and cultures.
■ Provocative essay by Edgar Morin, to stimulate discussion on how education can and should act as a force for the future and promote a transdisciplinary perspective to meet the great challenge of sustainable development.

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Focus

© Fang Chen, Shanghai
"We are one."

Colour, nation, ethnic hate...
Why Racism?

Once founded on the traditional notion of "race," racial discrimination today comes in many guises, whether based on one's colour, nation (xenophobia), ethnic belonging or caste. This dossier looks at its roots and impact on indigenous groups and black communities in Latin America, the lowest castes in Asia, and foreigners in Africa and Western Europe. Echoing the World Conference against Racism (Durban, South Africa, August 31-September 7), we strive to give a voice to the hundreds of millions of victims around the world.

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The dissident at heart struggles with democracy's eternal imperfection.

IN THIS ISSUE

Democracy

It may involve an endless search for compromise, but former Polish dissident Adam Michnik is proud to see democracy at work in his country (interview, pp. 47-51). In stark contrast to utopian projects, he says, the aim of democracy is to deal with clashing viewpoints and eclipse discrimination in any shape or form. While "scientific racism" is on the wane, millions of people around the world are victims of racial discrimination, which comes in many guises (pp. 16-37). Their plight represents a formidable challenge for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, South Africa, August 31-September 7).

Education

The figure is not mentioned often enough: 300,000 children serve as cannon fodder for an array of guerrilla groups and regular armies. Is there a way out for these 15-year-old veterans? One is to give them a chance to catch up on the school years they've missed (pp. 38-40). Otherwise, they too will join the world's 900 million illiterates. International Literacy Day on September 8 rewards organizations which refuse to accept the status quo, like Workbase in New Zealand, while recognizing the innovative efforts made by many other prize candidates like Israel (pp. 13-15).

Malnutrition

Can genetically modified organisms feed the Third World? Many experts and biotechnology companies say "Yes." But other agronomists are more sceptical: without equity and reforms, new technology will only make the rich richer (pp. 10-12).

Signed articles express the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of UNESCO or those of the editors of *the UNESCO Courier*. Photo captions and headlines are written by *the UNESCO Courier* staff. The boundaries on maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by UNESCO or the United Nations of the countries and territories concerned.

Jerusalem Utopia

PHOTOS BY DAVID SAUVEUR, TEXT BY ANDRÉ CHOURAQUI

DAVID SAUVEUR IS A FRENCH PHOTOGRAPHER; ANDRÉ CHOURAQUI HAS TRANSLATED THE BIBLE AND WRITTEN SEVERAL BOOKS. HIS LATEST WORKS INCLUDE *JÉRUSALEM, VILLE SANCTUAIRE* (EDITIONS DU ROCHER 1997) AND *LE FEU DE L'ALLIANCE* (BAYARD PRESSE 2001). HE IS ALSO A FORMER DEPUTY MAYOR OF JERUSALEM.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, rebuilt in the 11th century when Jerusalem was seized during the crusades.

© David Sauveur/Agence Vu, Paris

The tunnel beneath the Wailing Wall, sole remant of the temple destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Romans.

"Above all Jerusalem, whose name awakens so many mysteries and startles the imagination: it seems that everything must be extraordinary in this extraordinary city."
Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem (1811)*

IN MEMORY OF RENÉ CASSIN,
THE MAIN DRAFTER OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Jerusalem, the ancient capital of Judea, has been resuscitated today as a microcosm of the entire world, in all its contrasts and most glaring contradictions. Stand at an intersection in the city, and you'll see pass by a collection of the world's most diverse people, hailing from every country and century.

Since 1950 I have watched these crowds—crowds which no-one could have imagined or planned. The government of Israel opened the gates of Jerusalem to all Jews who wanted to move there. They have flowed in since from around the world, becoming neighbours in the city of Christ with Japanese Makuyas[1], members of 45 different Christian denominations and Muslims representing all the rites and geographic origins of Islam.

The merchants of the Old City hawk their products to passers-by and, in honour of trading tradition, barter over prices. Depending on the season, market stalls overflow with ▶

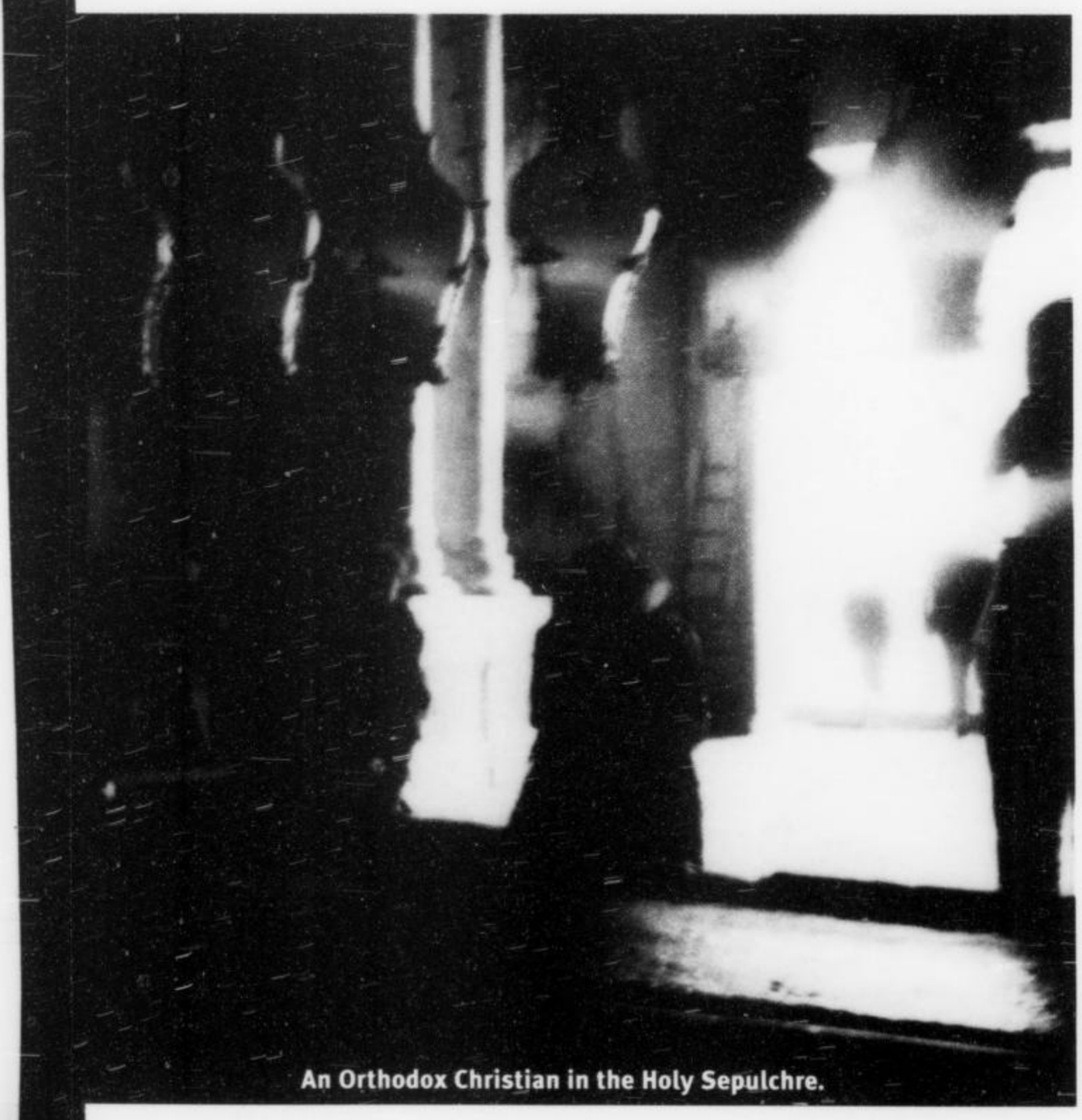
Jerusalem Utopia

oranges, grapes, dates and all the other fruits and vegetables that grow in the city's many orchards and gardens.

Spices, incense, cakes, pitta bread and sweets proliferate alongside religious trinkets and local crafts, made from wood and metal according to age-old techniques in little workshops nestled in the Old City's narrow streets. It is here that tens of thousands of pilgrims from every corner of Christendom flock to gaze on Christ's tomb.

Alongside Judaism and Christianity, another religion born from the Bible's fertile soil takes special interest in the city, for Jerusalem is also the place where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to Allah's heaven to meet Abraham, Moses and Jesus. All of Jerusalem—all 30 centuries of fervent history—are concentrated in 90 hectares enclosed by ramparts.

The city has roots in the Hebrew Bible (or the Book of the Covenant), the New Testament (or Book of the New Covenant) and the Koran (or Book of the Realization of all the Covenants since Abraham). A revived Jerusalem became the land of Israel's homecoming after the Balfour Declaration (1917) and the United Nations resolutions on November 29, 1947, which recommended the creation on territory then under a British mandate of two states—one Israeli, one Palestinian—around Jerusalem, placed under UN control. That homecoming was to reconcile all of Abraham's children—Jews, Christians and Muslims—and enable them to achieve together their common ideal: the universal covenant of humanity.



An Orthodox Christian in the Holy Sepulchre.

Amongst the remains of the Herodian quarter (first century B.C.).

Let Jerusalem at last become the model capital for universal peace

The conflict, which the United Nations had hoped to settle, has continued to this day through war between the state of Israel and the Palestinian people's representatives. The creation of a Palestinian state would help to end the violence that still drenches the city of peace in blood. The union of two states, one Israeli, the other Palestinian, in a single confederation open to other countries in the Middle East, could bring peace and progress to all in the future.[2]

No one, however, can speak of Jerusalem without mentioning its prophets, the tragedies of its history, the 2,000-year-old exile of its people and their homecoming after the Shoah. Then, the foundation of the state of Israel and its tragic consequences for the Muslim population, the Arabs' refusal to create a Palestinian state, the resulting inextricable conflict and the consecutive stalemate, made worse by a smouldering war that dares not speak its name.

No war can settle the conflict between two nationalisms and the three religions that share blood-soaked Jerusalem. Let us recognize that, and proclaim that this city is the historic capital of the three religions which have their roots there. Let us unite the people who live in the city by dividing their responsibilities: the holy sites are already administered by the religions laying claim to them.

Let us bring the Hebrew Bible, the Greek New Testament and the Arab Koran back to what they originally stood for: peace and reconciliation. Let Jerusalem at last become the model capital for universal peace, as the prophets of the three religions stemming from Abraham had always dreamt.

Is it utopian to believe that in the New Israel and its reborn capital, Muslims, Christians and Jews can dwell together in peace? If you think so, know that the future of world peace depends on achievement of this utopia. And that is probably why the psalms attributed to King David already exhorted:

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! (Psalm 122.6).

Why especially Jerusalem? Because this city is where cultures, religions and people of all ages and languages meet. Yes, let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem, a peace that could foreshadow that of the world's other cultures, when, quite simply, all men and women will recognize each other as their brothers and sisters. ■

1. *A group of Japanese Christians who since WWII have sought closer ties with traditional Christianity, the "people of the Bible" and Judaism.*
2. *André Chouraqui:* Lettre à un ami arabe, *J.-C. Lattès, 1994, and* Jérusalem revisitée, *Ed. du Rocher, 1995.*

© David Sauveur/Agence Vu, Paris

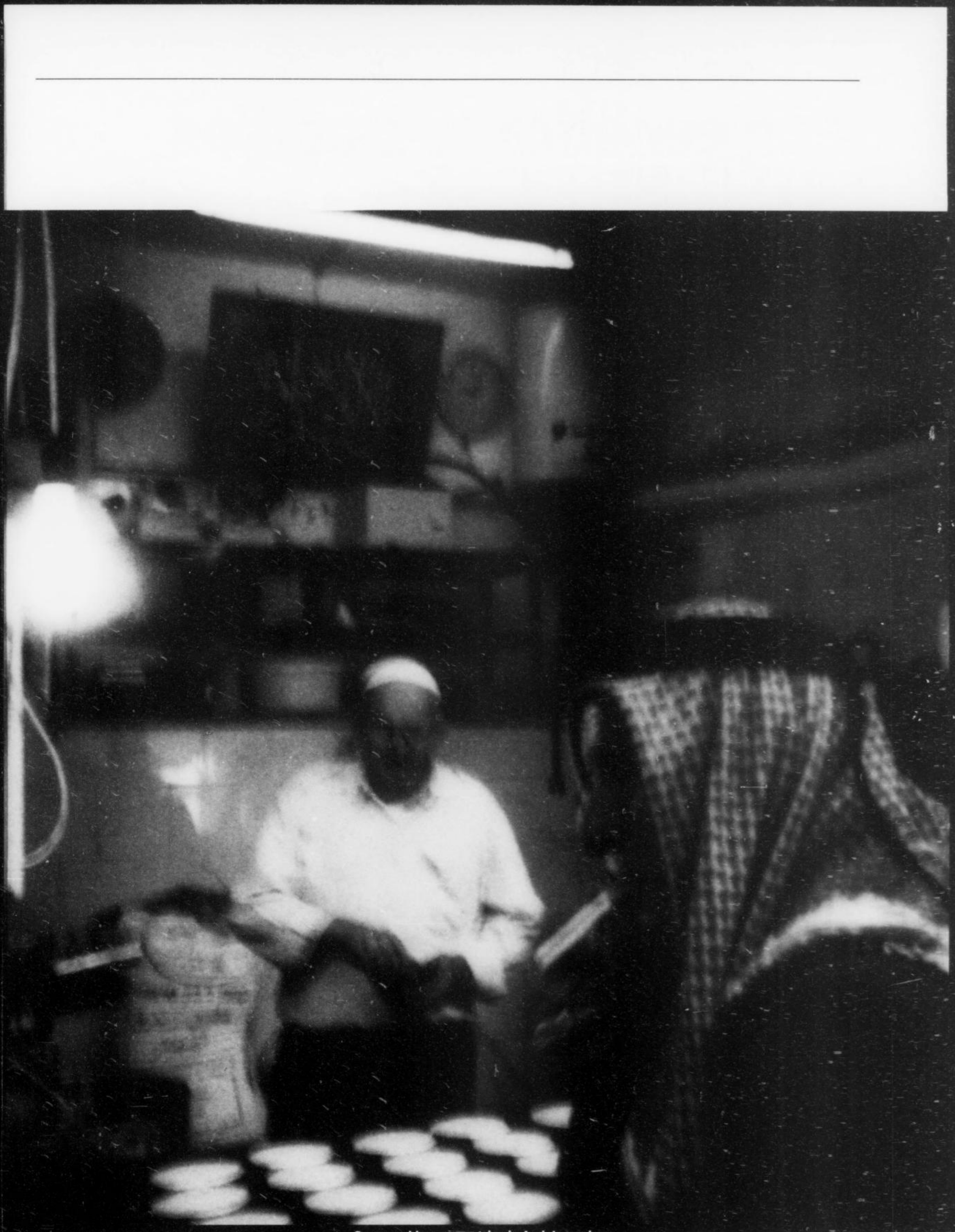
Stalls selling to tourists and pilgrims in the Old City's Christian Quarter.

Jerusalem Utopia

This city is where cultures, religions and people of all ages and languages meet.

© David Sauveur/Agence Vu, Paris

Near Damascus Gate, the northern entry to the Old City, where traces remain of the Ottomans, Romans, Byzantines and the crusades.



Sugar and honey: pastries in Arab Jerusalem.

Can genetically modified organisms feed the world?

The controversy over biotechnologies is raging. Advocates claim they're the only answer to malnutrition, while opponents warn that drought-resistant millet and vaccinated yams will only increase poverty

PHILIPPE DEMENET

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

Near Africa's mighty Niger River, farmers are anxiously waiting for rain to fall before they sow millet or sorghum, then hoe, harvest, feed their families and replenish their granaries. Meanwhile, researchers in Japanese, Chinese, Philippine, European and U.S. laboratories are making strides in sequencing the 12 chromosomes and 50,000 genes composing rice, the matrix of all grains and a staple for three billion human beings. In five to ten years, they hope to know enough to genetically modify not only rice, but millet, sorghum, manioc and sugar cane as well. The aim is to make them "naturally" resistant to drought, soil salinity, viruses, blights and other scourges.

Will these genetically modified organisms (GMOs) really guarantee "food security" in the short term for the world's 826 million undernourished individuals?[1] Will they help the small-scale farmers cultivating the Niger's barren, powdery soil to feed their families? The controversy is raging. In its 2001 report, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) says they will, emphasizing GMOs' "unique potential" to feed the world. In 50 years, the Earth's population will have soared to nine billion—three billion more than today.[2] And most of the newcomers will increase the already overwhelming pressure on the southern countries' much-depleted soil. The alarm has already been sounded for sub-Saharan Africa where, unlike India and China, the population growth rate is still sky-high and the number of undernourished people is barely declining.

© Reinhard Janke/Still Pictures, London

When it comes to developing technologies for indigent farmers, scientists rely mainly on the cash-strapped public sector.

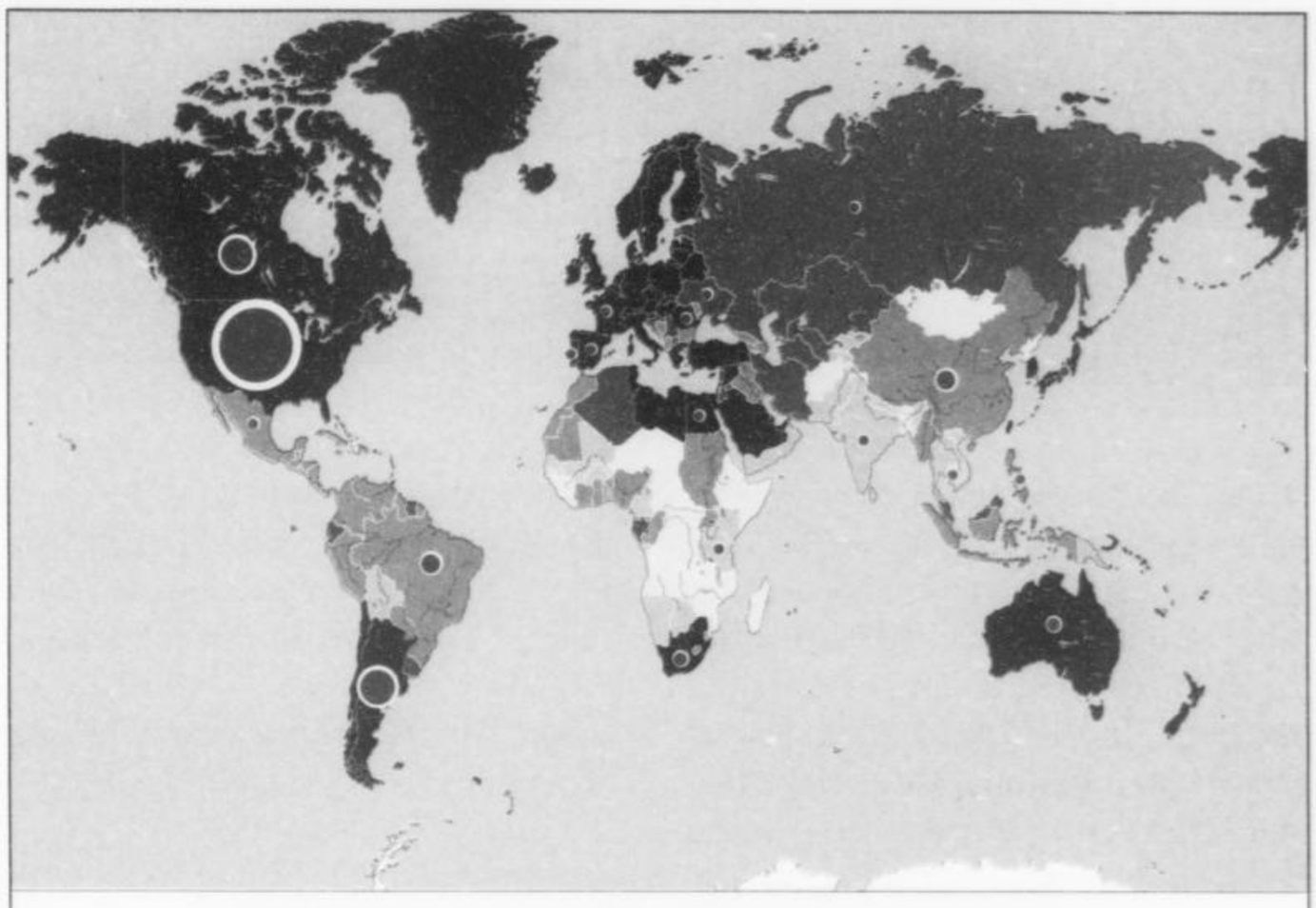
GMO supporters say only a major, revolutionary "technological leap" will enable the planet to feed all its children.

Experimenting with miracle seeds

But others strongly disagree, arguing that low food production is not what causes malnutrition. There is enough to eat in the southern countries, they say. But the world's poorest people, those with neither money nor land, living in disintegrating, war-torn countries, simply have no access to food. They argue that land-use conditions must change, poor people must have access to credit and local markets and small land-owners must be freed from money-lenders. Better use could be made of traditional seeds instead of importing high-risk technology with unpredictable consequences, most of whose patents belong to giant multinationals.

Advocates of the GMO revolution work in biogenetics laboratories, multinational seed and agrochemical companies, genome research, American foundations and some UN agencies, while most skeptics are out in the field. A case in point is Kanayo Nwanzé, a Ph.D. in agronomy who heads Adrao (Association for the Development of Rice Growing in West Africa) in Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire. "Are GMOs being developed for the needs of small-scale farmers or multinational corporations?" he asks. "If we manage to negotiate with these patent-holding multinationals a technology that meets the needs of small-scale farmers and that's not under license, then 'Yes!,' GMOs will have a role to play in Africa. But their impact will have to come under careful scrutiny and the region's countries must have safety rules and the means to enforce them."

Adrao researchers have experience with miracle seeds. With international funding, they have developed a revolutionary variety of rice called Nerica. Genetically unmodified, it is the result of a conventional cross between a high-yield but fragile variety of Asian rice and a local variety that has had 35 centuries to adapt to Africa's stressful environment. Nerica offers tremendous possibilities. It reaches maturity in 90 days instead of the usual 120 to 150, resists insects, yields three tonnes per hectare with neither fertilizers nor irrigation—compared with 1.5 tonnes for traditional varieties—and grows like a weed. Ideally, it should improve life for hundreds of thousands of small-scale farmers who practice pluvial rice farming on plots of land ranging in size from 20 to 200 square metres and help West Africa's countries drastically cut their rice imports, perhaps even to export the grain.



Transgenic crops and malnutrition: maps that don't overlap

Degrees of malnutrition

- Low prevalence and low depth of hunger
- Moderate prevalence and low depth (and vice versa)
- Moderate prevalence and moderate depth
- High prevalence and moderate depth
- High prevalence and high depth

GMOs in the world [●]

The United States alone harbours 70% of the world's transgenic crops, followed by Argentina (14%) and Canada (10%). Soya (used for oil and flour for animal feed) accounts for 54% of these cultivated areas, ahead of corn, colza and cotton.

Sources: FAO (1996-98) / Solagral - Unesco (1999)

Fear and red tape

However, this breakthrough is having difficulty leaving the laboratory. There are approximately 3,000 variants of Nerica, and for four years Nwanzé has been trying to involve small-scale farmers in selecting which ones to market. But in the summer of 2001, only a thousand Côte d'Ivoire farmers grew this "miracle rice" on a total of just one hectare. . . . Red tape, administrative delays and lack of communication between ministries and farmers, seed-certification organizations and rural credit institutions are to blame. A "technological leap" is not likely to help matters much. On the contrary. "If we offer a farmer genetically modified seeds, he'll say 'no thanks, I don't want to kill myself!'" says the head of Adrao.

Several African, Asian and South American countries have already passed laws regulating GMO production. But can they enforce them? Which laboratories will monitor the changes in biodiversity that might result from unforeseen crossbreeding between GMOs and related wild species? And with what funding? Who will see to it that pollen from GMOs capable of transmitting their defense mechanisms against insects and viruses do not spread? Researchers retort that it would be a mistake to focus on first-generation GMOs, which are necessarily flawed. "Soon we'll see the appearance of the second, third and fourth generations, which will meet developing countries' needs better," says Jean Claude Prot, who is currently dissecting rice's 12th chromosome at the Development Research Institute, a French public outfit affiliated with the International Rice Genome Sequence Project.

Biogenetics makes it possible, for example, to insert an insect's gene into a plant or vaccines into bananas or potatoes. To create a variety of rice that needs no more water than a camel (instead of the 4,000 to 5,000 litres necessary to produce one kilo), or again, to enrich plants with vitamins and minerals and develop others that revitalize acidic soil ▶

devastated by over-farming. So why not carry out the wildest projects?

It is easy to understand the enthusiasm of certain researchers and philanthropic institutions. For example, the Rockefeller Foundation sees what it calls the biotech-driven "second Green Revolution" as a way to make up for the first one's mistakes and tragedies. True, in the 1960s, the Green Revolution helped double food production by creating high-yield varieties of wheat and rice, keeping pace with the world's population growth. But these seeds, which need plentiful inputs (irrigation, fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides), have primarily benefited farmers who could afford to invest. Africa and the poorest areas in Asia and Latin America were left out. Moreover, the results for beneficiaries, such as China and Vietnam, are mixed: traditional varieties have vanished, irrigation has increased soil salinity, and farmers have over-used herbicides and pesticides to the detriment of their health and the environment.

Great expectations

Supporters of the "second Green Revolution" say GMOs should spark an explosive increase in yields without inputs and in extreme farming conditions. But will they benefit the poorest farmers? Until now, multinational agrochemical companies converted to the "life sciences" have focused all their investments on intensive crops with close connections to industry and built a wall of prohibitively-expensive patents around their discoveries. Only publicly-funded research has taken an interest in indigent farmers living in tropical areas. Strapped for cash, the public sector has been forced to sign cooperation agreements with the private sector at the risk of losing its independence.

Major biotech companies are accused, of producing "Frankenstein food," especially in Europe. They quickly caught onto the image-enhancing advantages of helping to develop GMOs for the Third World. In 2000, amid a blaze of publicity, biotech heavyweights granted the free use of 70 patents to help develop a genetically-modified variety of rice enriched with beta carotene. The grain was heralded as a "miracle rice" capable of conquering Vitamin A deficiency, which kills one to two million children each year. But so far, the "golden rice" has fallen far short of expectations. The publicly-funded, Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) estimates that it will take five to ten years before seeds can be distributed free to farmers with annual incomes of under $10,000, in line with the agreements signed with industry. Furthermore, it is still unclear how much of the rice has to be consumed to make up for a Vitamin A deficiency.

© A. Duclos/Gamma, Paris

Nerica, a miracle rice still in search of fertile ground.

For non-governmental organizations campaigning to protect the environment and preserve biodiversity, such as the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) network, this deal "could kneecap other, low-tech and more cost-effective solutions, such as re-introducing the many vitamin-rich food plants that were once cheap and available."

Lessons from the past

Will GMOs help wipe out malnutrition? The golden rice episode has set the tone for the debate. Advocates say it would be utopian to wait for a better world while existing technology can help solve the problem here and now. "Some argue that lack of food is simply a problem of unequal distribution.

If poor people were not poor, they could buy the food they need," says Rockefeller Foundation president Gordon Conway. "This is true, but over-simplistic. There are no signs the world is about to engage in a massive redistribution of wealth."

Adversaries of the "GMO revolution" have diametrically opposed priorities: equity first, technology later. Otherwise, they say, the same mistakes that were made during the 1960s will be repeated. The Green Revolution "increased production and the number of poor people at the same time," says Jean-Pierre Roca, director of France's Institute for Training and Support to Development Initiatives. "Where there isn't a credit system, middlemen and the powerful are the ones who appropriate improved seeds and the use of pesticides. The poorest farmers must go into debt and sell their land to wealthier ones. GMOs are hazardous if measures aren't taken to go along with them."

A pragmatic Nwanzé says that "GMOs aren't a priority. First it is necessary to improve the conditions of agricultural production and soil management, keep the ground from getting hard after clearing and decrease rice imports by impoverished West African countries. All that can be achieved without GMOs, which run the risk of impoverishing biodiversity." ■

1. *In 1996-98, 792 million of whom live in developing countries (34% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa, 35% of the population in Asia) and 34 million in the developed countries (source: FAO, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization).*
2. U.N. World Population Prospects: the 1998 Revision *(United Nations, New York, 1999).*

OGM, le champ des incertitudes ("GMOs, a field of uncertainty," published in French by UNESCO-Solagral, 2000).
http://www.solagral.org/publications/environnement/pedago/ogm_unesco_2000/indexbis.htm
www.rafi.org
www.irri.org

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

New Zealand: the right medicine

Rich or poor, no country is spared from a literacy problem. In New Zealand, caregivers in a retirement home have gained a new grasp on their job thanks to Workbase, one of this month's International Literacy Day prize-winners

LIBBY MIDDLEBROOK

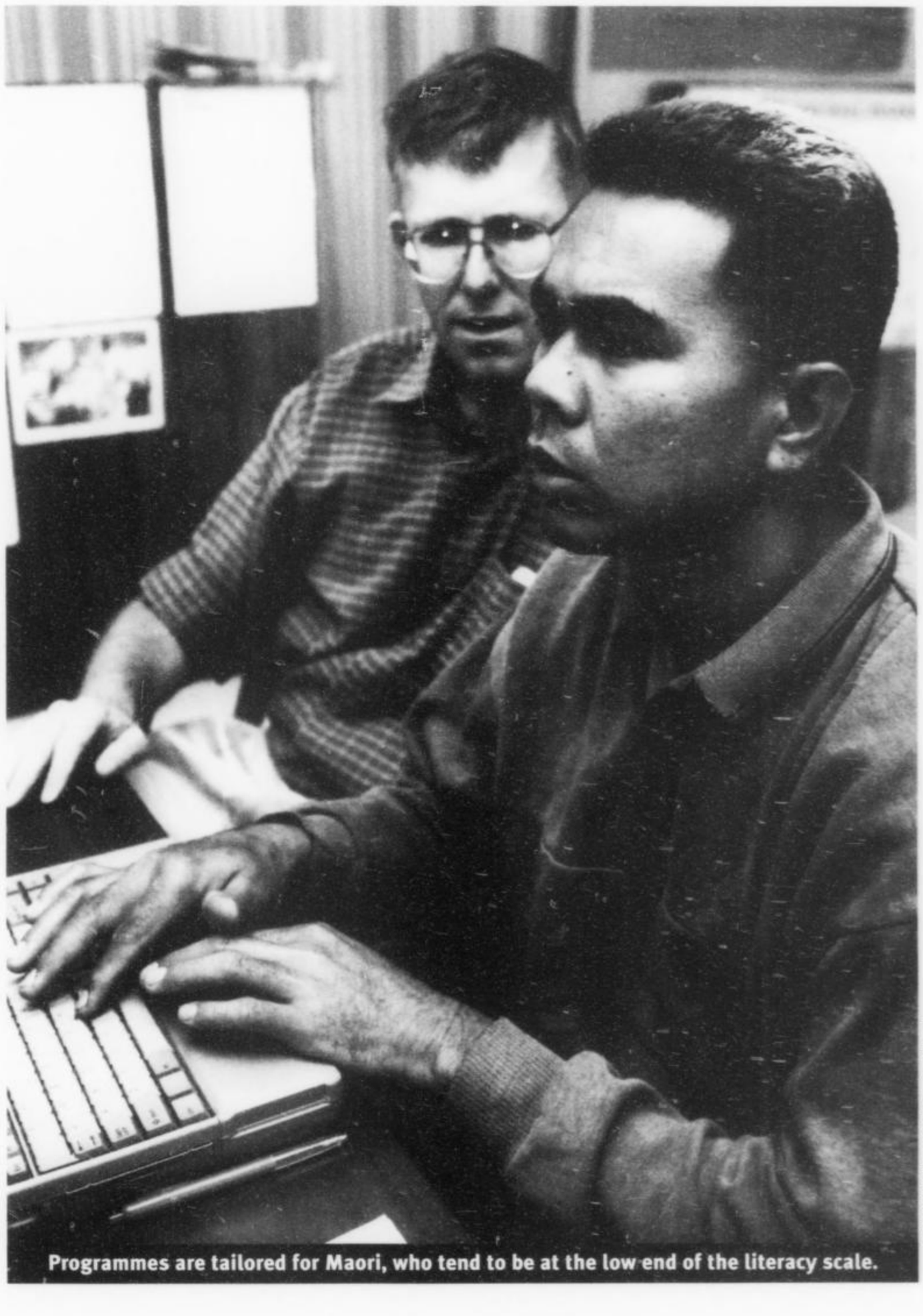
EDUCATION REPORTER FOR
THE NEW ZEALAND HERALD

When Julie Ahloo was first employed as a rest home caregiver four years ago, she hardly spoke to her work mates. She kept quiet to hide her difficulty with reading and understanding the medical terms on patients' care plans. The 34-year-old Samoan woman did not have the courage to ask for help either, in case her poor literacy skills caused her to lose her job.

At the time, Julie Ahloo was not the only caregiver in this position at Auckland's Mercy Parklands Hospital and Retirement home. The 94-bed private institution, owned by the Sisters of Mercy, had noticed rising inaccuracies and lack of detail in patient care plans, on which caregivers are supposed to record a resident's food and liquid intake and other issues relating to their health. Many of the 45 caregivers, employed to feed, dress and bath patients, were also having problems reading basic flow charts and detailing a patient's weekly activities, including dates and times.

Overcoming shame

"We thought the flow charts were quite simple to understand, but we started to realize that many of our workers couldn't understand basic math," said Jacki Richardson, the chief executive of Mercy Parklands. In an effort to improve the business' day-to-day operation, Mercy Parklands decided to offer its staff on-site literacy and numeracy programmes, with the incentive of being paid to improve their skills. Richardson said the business also wanted to boost the confidence of its caregiver staff members, who were largely unqualified Maori and Pacific Island women. Most spoke English as a second language. Mercy Parklands was also committed to running community outreach projects, which could benefit staff and their families. "We really wanted to improve staff morale...the caregivers didn't feel like they had anything to say, but we wanted their input into the business," she said.



Programmes are tailored for Maori, who tend to be at the low end of the literacy scale.

© Jeff Watkins/AMPM, Auckland

Mercy Parklands employed Workbase, New Zealand's national centre for workplace literacy and language, to design a programme to help any non-qualified staff who wanted to improve their skills.

Established in 1996, Workbase is a non-profit organization that works in ▶

partnership with business, the education sector and the government to improve English language, literacy and numeracy skills in the workplace. New Zealand's participation in the OECD's International Adult Literacy Survey (1998) found that 40 percent of people employed in New Zealand businesses are below the minimum level of literacy competence required for everyday life and work.

Today there are about 40 Workbase literacy programmes running in New Zealand businesses, operating across a range of sectors, including manufacturing, forestry and construction. The programmes, which predominantly reach Maori and Pacific Island people, are designed to build literacy skills concurrently with the technical skills and knowledge needed within a particular workplace. Since 1997, more than 20 staff at Mercy Parklands have attended weekly sessions with a Workbase tutor. Twelve caregivers have just completed National Certificates in Support of the Older Person.

All of them started out learning basic literacy, numeracy and oral communication programmes, accredited by New Zealand's national qualifications' framework. "When they started, some of them were too embarrassed to show me their answers," said tutor Andi McNish. "Now they're a really feisty bunch, with heaps of confidence and ideas." Spending around 30 minutes with each caregiver once a week, McNish designs personal study programmes for each caregiver, including homework and assessments. She also has the help of a part-time registered nurse from the hospital, who has been trained as a tutor to assist the caregivers.

Moving up in the world

"Everything has been tied in to their work. For example, if we were doing reading, then we would look at the in-house staff newsletter," said McNish, who works with several other companies as a Workbase tutor. Mercy Parklands, which spends more than $30,000 a year running the programme, has been rewarded with fewer mistakes and a more confident and motivated workforce. Morale has soared.

Caregivers take greater interest in the operational side of the business and are not afraid to offer suggestions about patient care, according to senior staff. Richardson said the quality of documentation, required by health authorities, had improved dramatically. "They are much closer to the patients and are able to advocate for their needs much more. Because they [the caregivers] have achieved something, they're so much more confident. It's like working with a completely different group of staff."

Four years after beginning a basic numeracy and literacy programme through Workbase, Julie Ahloo has just earned her first qualification — a National Certificate in Support of the Older Person. She has received a pay rise and helps her young children with their reading and writing homework after school.

"I'm a very different person now," she said. "I used to have low self-esteem, I wanted to speak up but I couldn't. But I'm very assertive now, I've got so much more confidence," said Ahloo, who left school at age 14 with no qualifications. Today she is making plans to study nursing. ■

NAMTIP AKSORNKOOL*: SELF-CONFIDENCE AND ECONOMIC RETURNS

When Moroccan fisherman upgrade their skills, when women in India become financially self-sufficient, when villagers in Rwanda pick up the pieces and move forward through a community education programme, each and everytime, a life is changed, and a small victory is won over the twin battles of poverty and illiteracy. International Literacy Day, celebrated each year on September 8, offers a chance to honour these achievements, notably through several prestigious prizes, but also, to reflect on where we stand. Our planet counts 900 million illiterate adults, two thirds of whom are women, a figure that runs the risk of rising if the over 110 million out-of-school children fail to receive quality education of some kind.

The issues are complex: literacy involves more than simply learning the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic). It is closely interwoven with the economic, cultural and political dimensions of a person's life. Faced with expanding poverty and the ever- widening gap between rich and poor, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, globalization of trade and the exponential burst of new information and communication technology, providing literacy has become a more complex task than ever before.

We must go beyond one shot programmes, projects or campaigns. Research and experience have provided us with considerable insight into the nature of literacy acquisition, yet outmoded teaching and learning approaches prevail. The long acknowledged and emphasized need for a two-pronged approach to literacy, linking school and out-of-school education, child and adult literacy, has seldom been incorporated into policy design and programmes.

For literacy work to be worthwhile, it has to be up-to-date, carefully targeted and useful for learners in tackling their varied and most pressing concerns. It has to be attuned to the flux of complex changes affecting their lives. Economic independence and spiritual well-being are but two examples of what literacy must help people achieve. Above all, literacy has to help people develop self-confidence and take charge of their own lives, equipped with the tools to tackle whatever challenges that might arise.

Literacy programmes that work may not be called literacy programmes. They might be called an HIV/AIDS prevention, or Information and Communication Technology programmes for the poor. Call them what you wish, literacy is at the base of all these provisions.

The United Nations Literacy Decade, soon to be launched, must serve as an impetus for investment. Eliminating poverty and illiteracy are two sides of the same coin, and political will is the key to success on both fronts. The bottom line is that without Literacy for All, the world's goal of Education for All will remain an elusive dream. ■

** UNESCO's section for literacy and non-formal education*

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

Learning Hebrew Ethiopian-style

In Israel, thousands of Ethiopian immigrants are learning to read and write for the first time. They begin not with their native Amharic but Hebrew

© Ariel Jerozolimski, Jerusalem

Grappling with an entirely new cultural universe.

ALLYN FISHER-ILAN

EDUCATION REPORTER FOR *THE JERUSALEM POST*

You've got to make it "relevant," insists Meir Peretz, the Israeli Education Ministry official in charge of adult education, in explaining a new approach to teach Hebrew to thousands of illiterate Ethiopian immigrants.

Since the early 1980's, Israel has brought in tens of thousands of Jews from Ethiopia, including two spectacular airlifts. More than 40,000 arrived in the 1990s and about 100 immigrants continue to trickle in each week.

The government earmarks about $30 million a year to teaching all immigrants Hebrew, according to Peretz. With the Ethiopians it's not an easy job, since as many as 90 percent cannot read or write in their native tongue, Amharic. The scale and scope of the project is unprecedented internationally, whereby "a group of mostly illiterate people is simultaneously trying to learn to read, write and converse in a foreign language," says Peretz.

Peretz realized several years ago that rote learning of vocabulary and grammar simply didn't work with most Ethiopian adults enrolled in the compulsory 10 months of government-funded classes, keeping many from joining the workforce and blending into Israeli society.

Peer learning

A major obstacle is the huge cultural difference between the rural lifestyle led by most of the Ethiopians and the customs of their adoptive Western country, Peretz says. "If I'm speaking with a native English-speaker, and he doesn't know what the Hebrew word is for glasses, then I can say what the word is. When a person doesn't even know what glasses are, then I have a cultural problem."

Peretz has sought to address this problem by putting Amharic-speaking veteran immigrants, like Isayas Hawaz, into the classroom for at least a quarter of the 25-hour a week lessons. Hawaz, 25, immigrated four years ago and now helps teachers translate their lessons into Amharic at an absorption center in Mevassaret Zion, a suburb of Jerusalem. Hawaz said Peretz's method made all the difference for him when he was learning Hebrew. "At first, I wanted to run away from class, I couldn't make any sense of the alphabet lessons we were getting. My self-confidence plummeted. Then when they [older Ethiopians] started translating, it all made sense," says Hawaz.

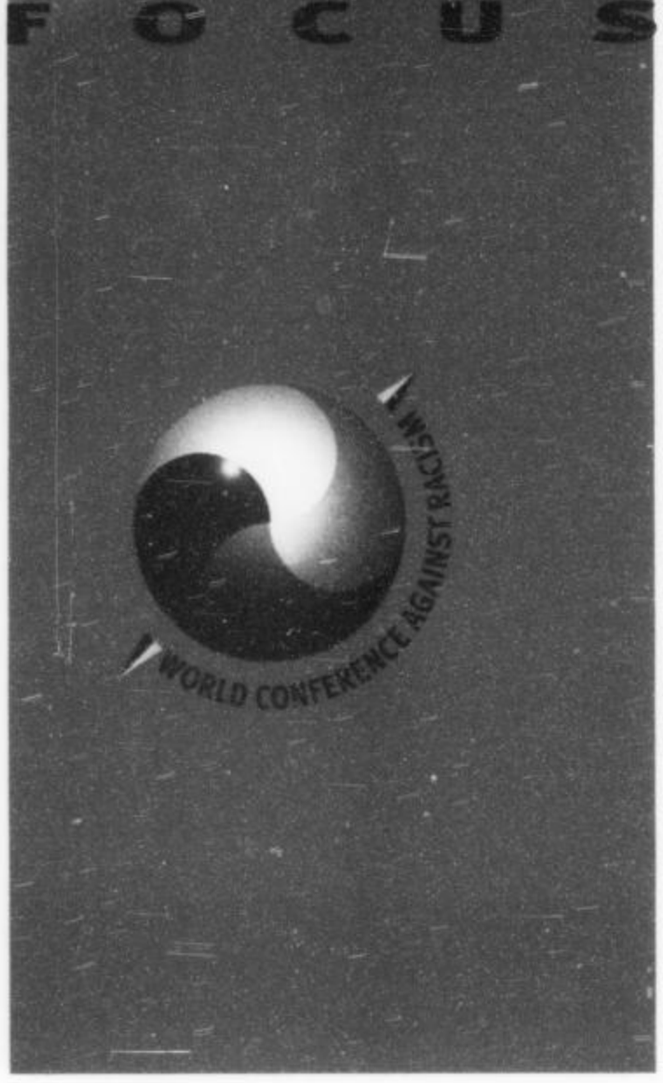
A temple lesson

Peretz's curriculum also seeks to pique pupils' interest by peppering language lessons with discussions of current events or cultural issues. "It is not a good idea to wait until someone knows Hebrew to explain what is happening in the country," he says.

On a hot July afternoon at the Mevasseret centre , teacher Rina Rosler discusses Tisha Be'Av, a recent Jewish day of fasting marking the anniversary of the destruction of the second holy temple in the Roman period. She reads her pupils a legend about the origin of the first temple which recounts that God chose the site because two quarreling brothers embraced there. She writes the key verbs in Hebrew on the blackboard and asks students for translations in Amharic. "The temple could only be built at a site where?" she asks. "...Where there is love," answers Sana'it Farada, 20, a newcomer from the Gondar region of Ethiopia.

Yet today that site is the scene of frequent Israeli-Palestinian violence. While the intifada didn't come up directly, the relevancy of the discussion wasn't lost on at least some of the 14 pupils. After class, teenager Mandefo Mengistu remarks in Hebrew that "the recent bomb attacks are not good." While beaming with confidence, Mengistu's grasp of the language is exceptional. Noa Navot, director of the Mevasseret classes, estimates that only half of the pupils with previous education in Ethiopia end up learning enough Hebrew to land a job. Navot feels the classes should be extended. "If you plant the seeds and don't bother to water them, they just go dry," she says.

Yet according to Peretz, very few immigrants have asked for extended courses. There is, however, growing interest in a new project to mix language instruction with vocational training. In the end, says Peretz, patience is required on both sides. ■



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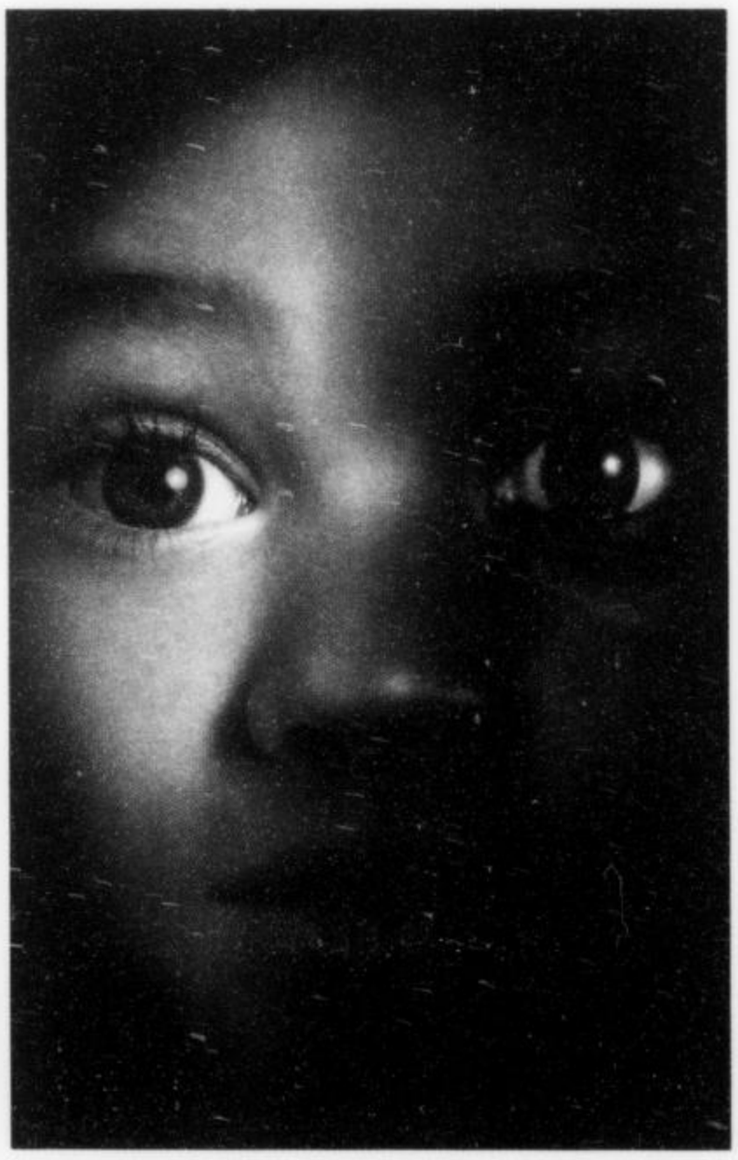
When it comes to dealing with racism, "silence is the worst attitude" says Lilian Thuram, member of France's World Cup-winning football team. Echoing his remarks, NGOs campaigning in the run-up to the World Conference against Racism (Durban, South Africa, August 31-September 7) have insisted that the voices be heard of the hundreds of millions of people around the world who are still victims of racial discrimination.

Institutional racism, the last incarnation of the myth that certain "races" are born inferior, died with the end of apartheid. Dating back to the Renaissance, nourished by religious then scientific thought, it reached its culmination with Nazism (pp. 21-23). Although the myth is flatly discredited today, its legacy lives on, as the status of blacks in South America goes to prove (pp. 24-26).

Most importantly, the decline of racist ideology does not signal the end of racial discrimination, grounded, as the UN stipulates, on "race, colour, or ethnic origin." Victims of this "veiled apartheid" are no longer discriminated against in the name of biological "inferiority," but because of religious tradition—the lowest castes in India (pp. 27-29)—or economic and political instability, which is fuelling waves of xenophobia in black Africa (pp. 30-32). Discrimination also occurs in the name of "cultural difference," deemed so profound that harmonious co-existence becomes impossible. Many indigenous peoples, like the Mapuche in Santiago, Chile (pp. 18-19), are in this position. So are millions of immigrants in Western Europe (pp. 33-35), where racism does not appear to be simply "spontaneous": rather, it is intricately linked to tensions generated by globalization (pp. 36-37).



Dossier concept and co-ordination by René Lefort and Ivan Briscoe, respectively UNESCO Courier *director and journalist.*

ION, ETHNIC HATE...

cism?

OPINION

SILENCE IS THE GREATER SIN

LILIAN THURAM

MEMBER OF FRANCE'S WORLD CUP-WINNING NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM

The first time I came up against racism was in France. I was nine years old, and blacks were given nicknames in my school. Was this racism? Coming from children, it might just seem like foolishness, but still it affected me. I'd come from Guadeloupe, where many communities live together, and I'd never felt any discrimination there.

Racism isn't natural. It's thought out, and generated by adults who establish differences on the basis of skin colour and culture. To do away with it, schools have a critical role to play. Children still learn about "human races," whereas there is in fact only one race. It would be more accurate to speak about different communities.

The history of peoples is very badly taught: each country grabs hold of it to justify their past behaviour. Likewise, I've always been shocked that blacks only appear in the history books from the time of slavery. Their life before this dramatic page of history is never revealed, as if they had always been slaves! Their true past and culture are all too often scorned, creating a historical void and pulling a veil down over the memory of these peoples.

If we want to have the slightest hope of eradicating racism, we have to commit ourselves to the task of memory. Certain nations must recognize the wrongs they have done, especially with regard to slavery, which I believe is one of the sources of racism. The truth must be written, not in a spirit of vengeance, but as a way to set us on the path toward genuine reconciliation.

The battle is far from won. When I arrived in Italy in 1996, I didn't notice any signs of racism or xenophobia. Then the situation suddenly took a turn for the worse. Why this rejection of the other? Why this aggression? These questions remain unanswered.

I lived through a painful experience during a match in Parma, my club at the time. Some fans started chanting a song about two black players: "Ba eats bananas in Weah's hut." At the end of the match, I raised the incident with other members of the club. I felt their indifference, and could not accept it. Keeping silent is the worst attitude to take. The fight against racism is also a fight against silence.

I meet regularly with Italian school kids and try to drive home the importance of communities mixing with one another—a source of vital cultural enrichment. I'm convinced that these youngsters would not throw their weight behind the kind of racist antics that are given free rein in football stadiums.

It's not enough to talk about the good things being done. You have to face what is bad, and use it to consider what is wrong. Evil must be fought on the spot so that it does not lead to intolerable problems. Football, for example, is a very powerful social force: we have to work towards eliminating all forms of racism in stadiums and stop people from using this sport as a platform for their unacceptable opinions.

I am disappointed that racism is still alive and kicking. It's been around for centuries. We're always being told that we live in a wonderful world that has brought people closer together thanks to new technologies. But reality is harsh: we have not made much progress in spiritual terms. The right to be different, even from one's neighbour, does not exist. Globalization, as I see it, means respecting the other, respecting a person's differences, because each and everyone of us carries a different history inside. ■

Chile's Mapuche Indians on the march for recognition.

© Dick Ross/Lineair, Arnhem

Shadows in the **big city**

Far from their native region of Araucanía, half a million Mapuche Indians live in the Chilean capital Santiago—a place of stigma and segregation

ANDREA ARAVENA REYES

ANTHROPOLOGIST AND SANTIAGO OFFICE CHIEF FOR THE NATIONAL CORPORATION OF INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT (CONADI)

The Mapuche Indians make up 10 percent of Chile's adult population—almost a million people in total, half of whom live in and around the city of Santiago. In the minds of most Chileans, however, the Mapuche is still thought of as a person with an indigenous surname, living in the southern region of Araucanía, belonging to an old-fashioned community and fighting for rights to land. All the rest are ignored and segregated.

As in most Latin American countries, Chile's Indigenous People's Law bans discrimination. Victims of prejudice, however, argue that the law is useless since not even Santiago's police officers believe what an Indian says. "When you complain to a military policemen and tell them that discrimination is against the law, they don't even know what the law is," says Elba Colicoi from the district of Peñalolen. "They look at us in amazement, laugh and tell us to 'calm down and go home.' But if one of us hits a naughty child, the neighbours say Mapuches are violent people and the police believe everything the Chileans say."

In the Mapudungun language, "mapuche" means "people of the earth." Until Chile gained independence from Spain in the early 19th century, the Mapuches lived in a 100,000 square kilometre region in south-central Chile—an area as

DURBAN: THE LEGACY OF SLAVERY

Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the international community has made important strides in the fight against racism. But at the turn of the new century—and despite the fact that the mapping of the human genome has reaffirmed our common humanity—racial prejudice persists in all parts of the world.

The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in Durban (South Africa) from August 31 to September 7, 2001, is the first such conference in the post-apartheid era. It stands as one more landmark in the UN's ongoing campaign. Since the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), the UN has adopted a series of conventions and declarations, proclaimed an International Year of Mobilization against Racism (2001), and organized three decades against racism (1973-1982, 1983-1992, 1994-2003) along with two world conferences on the same theme, held in Geneva (1978 and 1983).

While these previous conferences focused chiefly on apartheid, the delegations in Durban will debate an array of questions reflecting the complex interplay of racial prejudice and intolerance: political, social and economic exclusion, migration, human trafficking, indigenous peoples, minority rights, the role of the media, the Internet, religion and education. The conference aims to review progress made in the fight against racism, scrutinize stumbling blocks, analyze the root sources and contemporary manifestations of racism, and draw up concrete recommendations to combat it through education, prevention and the protection of victims.

For the first time, the heated question of slavery is on the agenda. Will it be proclaimed a crime against humanity? According to Doudou Diène, director of UNESCO's division for intercultural projects, "There's a theoretical consensus on the recognition of the slave trade as a crime against humanity." But on the issue of reparations, opinions diverge. One camp is demanding financial compensation. The other stresses the need for moral and historical atonement—they argue that money cannot paper over a tragedy that lasted for four centuries. Proclaiming the slave trade a crime against humanity and describing it as such in school history books might instead encourage people to empathize with the fate of millions of humans, and thus prove the most effective route to repairing this injustice. Others are advocating the cancellation of African countries' foreign debt, a measure that could jumpstart and give a jolt of optimism to many national economies. ■

big as Portugal. Between 1866 and 1927, they were forced to live in settlements covering only 5,000 square kilometres, barely five percent of the original area. According to the last census in 1992, 928,000 Mapuches now live in Chile.

Restrictions on Mapuches' property rights, lack of resources and the impoverishment of rural communities set off a huge migration from the land. Following 135 years of exodus—most of it forced—around half the country's Mapuches live in and around Santiago. If children are counted, one in 10 of Greater Santiago's inhabitants are from this community. Some indigenous intellectuals actually refer to the Mapuche diaspora.

Traditional dress unwelcome in the classroom

Although only 20 percent of Mapuches now live in the countryside, people still tend to have a stereotypical view of them as rural peasants which, consciously or not, makes it hard for any of them to feel like full-fledged citizens. The media compound these prejudices with pictures of land occupations in the south and armed battles with landowners near the villages, conveying a negative image of "poverty-stricken" Indians.

Yet after a century of emigration, the Mapuche urban diaspora is here to stay. Over 70 urban organizations have been set up in recent years to fight for their rights and end discrimination. In spite of this, the image of them as a rural folk still prevails. In the city, they are "invisible people" who, as they themselves admit, bear the stigma imposed by a society that regards them as lazy, drunk, culturally backward and aggressive.

This hostility has made most Mapuches renounce their identity, reject their language and change their names, all of which has caused serious psychological problems. To survive in the city, they have to camouflage their origins and try to appear like mere southerners or peasants. As a result, they are helping to make themselves invisible.

Both the discrimination suffered at the hands of society and the difficulties incurred in overcoming their marginal social status prevent Mapuches from integrating. Victims of discrimination lose self-esteem and marginalize themselves. Once they have thus rejected their individual identity, they naturally reject the customs of their own social group. ▶

At school, Mapuche children have to grapple with the Spanish language.

© Edward Parker/Still Pictures, London

Most urban Mapuches live in precariously built shanty-towns that have sprung up around Santiago in the past century. Besides poverty and other forms of exclusion, life in the slums also means enduring discrimination from their own neighbours. "Chileans look down on us in the settlement," says Juan Lemugnier, a Mapuche community leader. "They say 'here come the mini-Mapuches.' When they get annoyed, they say 'get over here, Indian, or get lost, Indian.' This changes when they get to know us, but the problem is we always have to make more of an effort than other people."

The main hurdle for Mapuche children is language. At home they speak Mapudungun, but most schools only teach Spanish and foreign languages, which means Mapuche children have a harder time absorbing the mainstream culture. As a result, more and more parents are deciding not to teach them the Mapuche language in the hope that they will speak better Spanish—a kind of linguistic demolition aimed at achieving a sense of ethnic belonging. Families fear in particular that children who do not speak Spanish properly will be laughed at. One community leader recalled that as a child he was called "*chamaco*," the Mexican word for a little boy, because people in Santiago who did not know a word of Mapudungun thought his accent was Mexican.

When community leaders take their children to school in traditional Mapuche dress to assert their identity and "visibility," they run into opposition from school inspectors, who refuse to let the children in unless they are clothed like other pupils. Only during folk festivals are they allowed to wear traditional clothes, which is rather like turning the Mapuche into a sort of "fancy dress."

© V. Rojas/STR/AFP, Paris

Demanding their rights during a rally in Santiago.

As for the typical urban Mapuche worker, he or she is someone with few qualifications who changes jobs often, works long hours for a pittance, faces discrimination because of physical appearance and is the target of ill-treatment and excessive demands by employers.

"The bosses and the companies don't hire us because they think we're aggressive," argues Juana Coliqueo from the district of Quilieura. "When they do hire us, they want us to work in the kitchen, up on the scaffolding or in the storeroom, where nobody can see us. Have you noticed that the bigger the firm, the more blonde, blue-eyed secretaries there are?"

For women, the most common job is in domestic service, which provides them with food and lodging, but also conceals them from urban society. Men get jobs in construction or in bakeries, which allow them to sleep in the daytime and work at night. This enables the urban Mapuche to stay "hidden," avoid discrimination and become familiar with life in the city. Even though such jobs are seen as forced, undesirable, degrading and lowly, they are still the main source of income for Mapuches.

In line with legislation across the continent, Chilean law strongly condemns discrimination. Taking this law as a yardstick, Mapuches are quick to point out that Chilean society clearly harbours racist and xenophobic features, and practises discrimination on the basis of racial, ethnic or social origin. The main victims are half a million citizens who, to be accepted by society, have to swallow the humiliation of hiding their identity and passing unnoticed. ■

A QUICK GLOSSARY

According to *The Social Science Encyclopedia* (Routledge, 1996), *racism* is "the idea that there is a direct correspondence between a group's values, behaviour and attitudes, and its physical features." The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1965) defined *racial discrimination* as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise. . . of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Ethnicity, derived from the Greek *ethnikos*—the adjective of *ethnos*, meaning people or nation—refers to "a fundamental category of social organization which is based on membership defined by a sense of common historical origins, and which may also include shared culture, religion or language" (*The Social Science Encyclopedia*). *Ethnocentrism*, according to the *Dictionnaire de Sociologie* (Le Robert/Seuil, 1999) is the "tendency to make the group one belongs to the single model of reference."

Multiculturalism is "the idea, or ideal of the harmonious co-existence of differing cultural or ethnic groups in a pluralist society" according to *The Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Routledge, 1984). *Xenophobia*—derived from the Greek *xenos* for strange and "phobia," a fear or aversion—literally means a fear of strangers. ■

1. ROOTS

The **rise and fall** of the laboratory racist

Until the Middle Ages, communities discriminated against each other and vied for power. In the following centuries, the Bible, economics and science gave birth to a new phenomenon: the hierarchy of race

GEORGE M. FREDRICKSON

PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY, AUTHOR OF *THE COMPARATIVE IMAGINATION: ON THE HISTORY OF RACISM, NATIONALISM AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS* (UNIVERSITY OF CALFORNIA PRESS, 1997)

Racism exists when one ethnic group or historical collectivity dominates, excludes, or seeks to eliminate another on the basis of differences that it believes are hereditary and unalterable. An ideological basis for explicit racism, in this sense, came to a unique fruition in the West during the modern period: no clear and unequivocal evidence of racism beyond discrimination or rivalry between communities has been found in other cultures or in Europe before the Middle Ages.

Perhaps the first sign of this racist view of the world appeared in the identification of the Jews with the devil and witchcraft in the popular mind of the 13th and 14th centuries. Official sanction for such attitudes came in 16th-century Spain, when Jews who had converted to Christianity *and their descendants* became the victims of a pattern of discrimination and exclusion.

The period of the Renaissance and Reformation was also a time when Europeans were coming into increasing contact with people of darker pigmentation in Africa, Asia and the Americas, and were thus making judgements about them. The motive for enslaving Africans was primarily economic—their labour was needed on the plantations of the New World—but the official rationale was that they were heathens. Slave traders and slave owners sometimes interpreted a passage in the book of Genesis as their ▶

© Fototeka Nazionale/Leemage, Paris

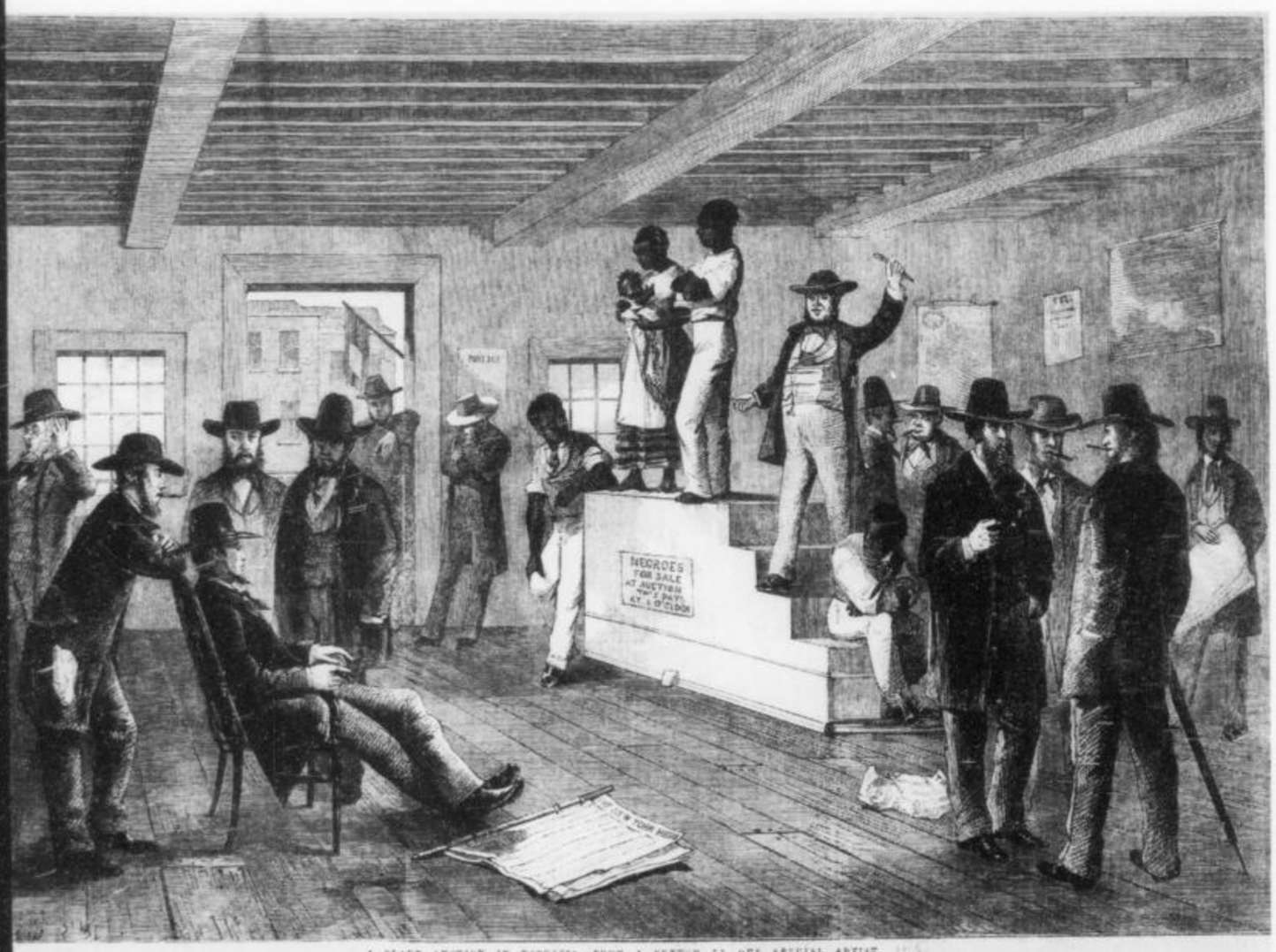
The Inquisition strikes: a 15th-century engraving depicts the fate of Jews who refused to renounce their faith.

We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now.

Martin Luther King, American civil rights leader (1929-1968)

justification. Ham, they maintained, committed a sin against his father Noah that condemned his supposedly black descendants to be "servants unto servants." When Virginia decreed in 1667 that converted slaves could be kept in bondage, not because they were actual heathens but because they had heathen ancestry, the justification for black servitude was thus changed from their religious status to something approaching race. Beginning in the late 17th century, laws were also passed in British North America forbidding marriage between whites and blacks and discriminating against the mixed offspring of informal liaisons. Without clearly stating so, such laws implied that blacks were unalterably alien and inferior.

During the Enlightenment, a secular or scientific theory of race moved the subject away from the Bible's teachings, with their insistence on the essential unity of the human race. Eighteenth-century ethnologists such as Linnaeus, Buffon and Blumenbach began to think of human beings as part of the natural world, and subdivided them into three to five races, usually considered as varieties of a single human species. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, however, an increasing number of writers, especially those committed to the defence of slavery, maintained that the races in fact constituted separate species.



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The way it was: a slave market in Virginia, circa 1861.

The 19th century was an age of emancipation, nationalism, and imperialism—all of which contributed to the growth and intensification of ideological racism in Europe and the United States. Although the emancipation of blacks from slavery and Jews from the ghettoes received most of its support from religious or secular believers in fundamental human equality, the consequence of these reforms was to intensify rather than diminish racism. Race relations became less rigidly hierarchical and more competitive. The insecurities of a burgeoning industrial capitalism created a need for scapegoats. The Darwinian emphasis on "the struggle for existence" and concern for "the survival of the fittest" was conducive to the development of a new and more credible scientific racism in an era that increasingly viewed race relations as an arena for conflict rather than the outcome of a stable ranking.

Moral revulsion

It was nationalism, especially a type of romantic cultural nationalism marrying ethnic heritage (thought of in terms of blood) to a sense of collective identity, that marked the growth of a new variant of racist thought, especially in Germany. Beginning in the late 1870s and early 1880s, the coiners of the term "anti-Semitism" made explicit what some cultural nationalists had previously implied: that to be Jewish in Germany was not simply to adhere to a set of religious beliefs or cultural practices, but meant belonging to a race that was the antithesis of the race to which true Germans belonged.

Western imperialism in the late 19th century, meanwhile, was reaching a climax. The "scramble for Africa" and forays into parts of Asia and the Pacific represented an assertion of the competitive ethnic nationalism believed to exist between European nations (and which, as a result of the Spanish-American War came to include the United States). It also constituted a claim, allegedly based on science, that Europeans had a natural-born right to rule over Africans and Asians.

It was nevertheless only in the 20th century that the history of racism reached its zenith: the rise and fall of overtly racist regimes. In the American South, segregation laws and restrictions on black voting rights reduced African Americans to lower caste status. A key feature of this regime was fear of sexual contamination through rape or intermarriage, which led to efforts to prevent the conjugal union of whites with those that had any known or discernible African ancestry.

Racist ideology was of course carried to its extreme in Nazi Germany through the attempted extermination of an entire ethnic group. Hitler, it has been said, gave racism a bad name. The moral revulsion of people throughout the world against what the Nazis did, reinforced by scientific studies undermining racist genetics (or eugenics), served to discredit the scientific racism that had been respectable and influential in the United States and Europe before World War II.

Explicit racism also came under devastating attack from the new nations created in the wake of the decolonization of Africa and Asia. The Civil Rights movement in the United States, which succeeded in outlawing legalized racial segregation and discrimination

UNESCO: OVERCOMING IGNORANCE

"The great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by. . .the propagation. . .through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races," declares UNESCO's Constitution. For over a half a century, the Organization has devised strategies aimed at tackling the root causes of racism, essentially through education and exchange of knowledge. Alongside special UNESCO university chairs and programmes of anti-racist education, many publications, campaigns and projects have been employed in the fight against prejudice and cultural bigotry.

It is a long and painstaking task, aimed not only at removing obstacles to mutual understanding, but also proving that human history is a tale of continuous exchange such that no people or ethnic group can be deemed "pure." All culture, in short, is the fruit of dialogue.

By emphasizing this history of cultural diversity, projects such as the Silk Roads (launched in 1988), the Slave Route (1994) and the Iron Roads in Africa (1995) have enabled UNESCO to tackle racism by shedding light on the cultural and spiritual ties between peoples. This same approach is employed in a series of comprehensive history works published by UNESCO that describe the complexity and wealth of contradictions underlying human development: the *History of Humanity*, the *General History of Africa*, the *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, *The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture*, the *General History of the Caribbean* and the *General History of Latin America*.

Other projects such as Intercultural Dialogue in Everyday Life, M.U.S.I.C (music, urbanism, social integration and culture), or Culture in the Neighbourhood are more specifically oriented toward young people.

For the past ten years, UNESCO has turned its attention to momentous developments in the field of health and life sciences: its International Bioethics Committee, made up of 55 members (including scientists, jurists, economists, demographers, anthropologists, philosophers and nutritionists) drew up a Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and on Human Rights that was adopted in 1997. Two decades after the UNESCO Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice (1978), this first international text on bioethics disclaims once and for all the pseudo-scientific foundations of racism. ■

in the 1960s, drew crucial support from the growing sense that national interests were threatened when blacks in the United States were mistreated and abused. In the competition with the Soviet Union for "the hearts and minds" of independent Africans and Asians, racial segregation became a national embarrassment with possible strategic consequences.

"Cultural racism"

The one racist regime that survived World War II and the Cold War was the South African. Laws passed in 1948 banning all marriage and sexual relations between different "population groups," and requiring separate residential areas for people of mixed race and Africans, demonstrated a clear obsession with "race purity." But the climate of world opinion in the wake of the Holocaust induced apologists for apartheid to rest their case for "separate development" mainly on cultural rather than physical differences.

The defeat of Nazi Germany, the desegregation of the American South and the establishment of majority rule in South Africa suggest that regimes based on biological racism or cultural purity are a thing of the past. But racism does not require the full and explicit support of the state and the law. Nor does it require an ideology centred on the concept of biological inequality. Discrimination by institutions and individuals against those perceived as racially different can long persist and even flourish under the illusion of non-racism, as historians of Brazil have recently discovered. The use of allegedly deep-seated cultural differences as a justification for hostility and discrimination against newcomers from the developing world—whether they be Algerians in France, Turks in Germany, Pakistanis in Britain, Mexicans in the United States—have evoked charges of a new "cultural racism" despite the dominant group's explicit disavowal of any kind of biological superiority.

Such recent examples of racism are not unprecedented. They rather represent a reversion to the way that the differences between groups could be readily made to seem indelible and unbridgeable before the articulation of a scientific or naturalistic conception of race in the 18th century. ■

OUR COMMON BLUEPRINT

When scientists unveiled a blueprint of the human genome about a year ago, the press trumpeted the potential windfall of new drugs and treatments to remedy inherited diseases, like certain forms of diabetes. But beyond the potential of medical benefits, the research also marks a decisive strike against racism by disproving the myth of race. Genetic research demonstrates that we all descend from a common ancestor in Africa. Furthermore, most human genetic differences are found in all populations and presumably arose before modern humans left Africa some 50,000 years ago and subsequently divided into ethnic or "racial" groups Indeed, it has been estimated that only 0.012 percent of the variation between humans in total genetic material can be attributed to differences between the so-called "races."

However, the roots of some genetic diseases may lie in this small amount of diversity that has spawned a major debate in the international scientific community. When collecting and comparing DNA samples, should geneticists record the ethnicity of the donors?

Those opposed to ethnic labelling point out that this kind of information will probably not be very helpful because most genetic diseases are linked to variations which are spread across the entire human population. These critics also point out medical research related to ethnicity is regularly distorted by racist groups. On the other side, by tagging or monitoring ethnicity, geneticists can be certain that they are not inadvertently ignoring a particular group in their surveys. Some bioethicists also point out that, if handled properly, these population studies could be used to show people just how much we share genetically and disprove the widespread belief that some groups are "genetically" more intelligent or advanced than others. ■

A vicious circle: poorly educated, Afro-Brazilians are often restricted to low-paid jobs.

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Stuck at the gates of paradise

Brazil enjoys a reputation as a multiracial haven, but prejudice still has a stranglehold on society and slavery remains far from a distant memory

DIANE KUPERMAN

BRAZILIAN JOURNALIST AND WRITER

In a very short time—what is 501 years on the scale of human history?—immigrants from around the world have streamed to Brazil. The mixture of colours and peoples along with the joys of living in tropical latitudes soon gave rise to the myth that Brazil is a "racial democracy." This stereotyped image, so well spread by the media, proclaims that Brazil is a socially harmonious country where people of different colours always get along.

But behind the smiles that light up in black, white, brown, red and yellow faces when the first drum is struck in the samba schools, the truth is hidden: racial, social and economic prejudices exist, and must be denounced.

After Portuguese explorers discovered Brazil in 1500, slavery existed on its soil for over three centuries. On May 13, 1888, it became the last western country to abolish the practice. Brazil was also the biggest importer of slaves in modern history: 40 percent of the blacks exported from Africa to the New World ended up there.

As a result, Rio de Janeiro became the world's largest African city and slave port, and the Mercado do Valongo the biggest slave market. Today Nigeria is the only country to have a larger black population.

Bleaching the society

Sexual relations between whites and their slaves—especially white sons having sex for the first time with black women—gave rise to a large mixed-race population that today outnumbers blacks. Sometimes freed slaves were "adopted," which eased their plight by sparing them the struggle with a world for which they were unpre-

pared, but kept them in their erstwhile menial jobs and perpetuated the apparent (and sometimes genuine) affectionate relations with the "masters in the big house."

The expression "racial democracy" appeared in the 1930s and was intended to mask the intentions of the government, which wanted to "bleach" society by encouraging the "most advanced races"—in other words, white Europeans—to migrate to Brazil. The country had accepted the myth of black racial and intellectual inferiority, and urgently wanted to take action to change the racial make-up of the Brazilian population, where descendants of Africans were in the majority.

The immigrants' arrival only worsened the plight of blacks: the few jobs they could aspire to fill became even scarcer. Forty years after emancipation, former slaves and their descendants swelled the ranks of street people and beggars. Those who did have a place to live dwelled in shantytowns, and when they had jobs, their skills and wages were low.

Skewed job applications

Statistics today point to glaring inequality, starting with child mortality: out of every thousand children, 62 blacks and 37 whites die at an early age (76 blacks and 45 whites among children under five). Life expectancy for adult Afro-Brazilians is six years shorter than it is for whites: 62 years for men and 68 for women.

The illiteracy rate among blacks is 22 percent, the average length of time they spend in school six years. When they reach the labour market, most are still children or have a teenager's schooling. Barely 18 percent have access to higher education, and among that 18 percent, just 2.3 percent graduate from university. The inadequacy of their training is reflected in professional life, where blacks are restricted to low-paid menial jobs.

When looking for work, they know beforehand that if a white person with the same qualifications is applying for the same position, the odds are hopelessly stacked against them. And when they do find work, they are often the victims of unfair wage policies that favour whites in identical jobs. This vicious circle is visible in statistics on unemployment (the jobless rate is 11 percent for black men and 16.5 percent for black women) and poverty (34 percent of blacks live below the poverty line and 14 percent are classified as destitute).

Five years ago, *O Dia*, Rio's best-selling newspaper, carried out a survey of the bars and restaurants along the beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema. The findings revealed that just one of the 318 employees working in these businesses was black. Hotels, restaurants, banks and shops seldom hire blacks, arguing that customers do not like people of colour to wait on them. Discrimination is blatant in the classified ads of newspapers, where "neat appearance" is actually code for "blacks need not apply." Code Four of Brazil's National Employment System is even more perverse: it requires job-seekers to mention their skin colour, enabling employers to turn down applications on the pretext that the position has already been filled.

In recent years, racial hatred, which is blatant in big cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, has unfortunately spread to Jews, Indians, gypsies, gays and even Nordestins (white Brazilians from the country's north-eastern region in search of better living conditions).

Hotels, restaurants, banks and shops seldom hire blacks, arguing that customers do not like people of colour to wait on them.

The significance of racist activities can no longer be downplayed by calling them scattered. Though officially prohibited, anti-Semitic and revisionist publications are legion. The Internet distills hatred of blacks, Jews and gays. Desecration of Jewish cemeteries and spray-painted swastikas or insults on walls have become everyday occurrences.

Things are getting out of hand, and tomorrow xenophobes may target any group, regardless of colour, origins or religion.

Meanwhile, the white population turns a deaf ear. A recent survey by the University of Brasilia reveals that 35 percent of those polled reluctantly admitted to being racist, while 65 percent denied it. The insidiousness of invisible racial prejudice was compared to a B-2 Stealth bomber, which radars cannot detect.

Xenophobes are those who don't have faith in the virtues of their own people.

Jorge Luis Borges, Argentine writer (1899-1986)

Working against the grain

In the 1980s, black community leaders decided it was time to react and began organizing efforts to combat prejudice, fear and resistance. Overcoming their political and religious differences, they joined forces to create non-governmental organizations that defend the rights of blacks and commissioned studies to gain a truthful assessment of the situation. At the same time, they started working to preserve their African ancestors' cultural and religious values. The goal was to ▶

strengthen black identity and make Afro-Brazilians feel proud of their colour and traditions. Publications of the highest quality sought to create and extol black role models that might replace white ones.

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Benedita da Silva, the first black woman elected to the Brazilian Congress.

Publishers, including children's book publishers, started singing the praises of real and fictional black heroes. Even cosmetics companies hopped on the bandwagon, selling beauty products for every skin tone, type of hair and style of dress.

A government stand

The government, which until now was concerned by poverty but never by racism, has even started to address the issue. It must be acknowledged that Brazil has signed the main international human rights conventions and is on the cutting edge of anti-racist legislation. The constitution prohibits all forms of prejudice and considers racism "a crime without statutory limits." Last year, the state of Rio took a new initiative by creating "SOS Racism and anti-Semitism," a hotline set up by the secretariat of public safety to receive complaints from victims of racism.

But outlawing racism is not enough. Regardless of their colour, Brazilians must take action to raise each individual's awareness of social injustice, and incite everyone to help wipe out inequality. ■

COLOMBIA'S COLOUR-BAR

"But there aren't any blacks in Colombia!" exclaimed a Colombian now living in New York after hearing the ethnologist Luz Riviera discuss her recent research into the country's black indigenous communities. "What do you mean there aren't? They're over 22 percent of the population," replied Riviera. "If there are, then they aren't Colombians," insisted the lady.

Luz Riviera tried to explain that the seven million blacks now living in the country are not only as Colombian as her, but that it was also highly likely that she had at least one black ancestor. "God save me from having a black in my family!," the aggrieved woman replied.

As in other Latin American countries, racism towards blacks and indigenous peoples is a fact of life in Colombia. And just as in other countries of the region, victims of this racism tend to be "invisible" in the eyes of those who practise the discrimination.

Black slaves were introduced into what is now Colombia by the first Spanish conquistadors. From the very beginning they clustered in communities largely along the northern coast close to Cartagena, the principle "black port" of the era, as well as on the western Pacific coastline and the Caribbean archipelago of San Andrés and Providencia.

The "Afro-Colombians"—as they are officially known—also live in the country's big and medium-sized cities, such as Cartagena, Buenaventura, Cali, Turbo, Barranquilla or Medellín, places where their segregation takes on all the features of marginalization. "In Cartagena, the only blacks who can enter certain clubs and restaurants are those who are serving. In Bogotá and Cali, most domestic servants are black, often dressed in pink uniforms," explains Luz Riviera.

Over time, continued discrimination has led many to setting up home in rural, isolated areas, where they live in virtually self-sufficient communities working on small land-holdings or as employees for large farms. Some simply live on the fish they can catch.

Life in such communities is not much better than in other parts of the country. According to the Third report on the Human Rights Situation in Colombia, carried out for the Organization of American States and published in 1999, "a disproportionate number of blacks live in conditions of extreme poverty." Afro-Colombians inhabit some of the most conflict-ridden parts of the country and earn incomes below the national per capita average. Illiteracy rates both in rural and urban areas remain extremely large, while black communities suffer high rates of infant mortality and serious diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, gastro-enteritis and lung infections. The report puts this down to a lack of drinking water, electricity and basic medical services.

Faced with their exclusion from the rest of society, many communities continue to co-operate closely with groups of indigenous peoples, with whom they first formed links under slavery when blacks were forced to work in gold and silver mines while Indians tilled the land. Luz Riviera has studied these inter-ethnic relations in an isolated village on the banks of the Guayabero river in the region of Serranía del Baudó.

"Thirty or so black families living there have created ritual family ties with indigenous families living deeper in the jungle. What frequently happens is that an indigenous person asks a black man to be the godfather of his son, sealing a relation of *compadrazgo* [joint fatherhood] which helps make the lives of both families somewhat easier in light of the discrimination both suffer." ■

2. THE EXCLUDED

India's "hidden apartheid"

India's ancient caste system persists, subjecting millions to degrading poverty and human rights abuses. Attitudes die hard, despite government legislation to usher in change

GOPAL GURU, WITH SHIRAZ SIDHVA

PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL STUDIES AT PUNE UNIVERSITY AND FELLOW, CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF DEVELOPING SOCIETIES (DELHI). SHIRAZ SIDHVA IS A *UNESCO COURIER* JOURNALIST

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Street sweepers in Bombay: a "ritually polluting" job.

For centuries, the untouchables of Paliyad, a nondescript village in western India's Ahmedabad district, have known their place. Many of them are manual scavengers, cleaning the toilets of upper-caste villagers or toiling the land, sometimes for less than a handful of rice a day.

"We've known that we must stay away from them [upper-caste people] since the day we were born," says Rajesh, who is going on 19. "At the tea stalls, we have separate cups to drink from, chipped and caked with dirt, and we're expected to clean them ourselves. We have to walk for 15 minutes to carry water to our homes, because we're not allowed to use the taps in the village that the upper castes use. We're not allowed into temples, and when I attended school, my friends and I were forced to sit just outside the classroom... the upper caste children would not allow us even to touch the football they played with... we played with stones instead."

More than 160 million people, a sixth of India's population, continue to bear the burden of a 2,000-year old caste system sanctioned by Hindu theology, which locks people into a rigid role by virtue of their birth.

Codes to suit the upper class

Though the term "untouchables" was abolished in 1950 under India's constitution, the "oppressed people" or Dalits as they are now referred to, continue to be discriminated against. They are denied access to land, forced to work in humiliating and degrading conditions and are routinely abused by the police and upper-caste groups, which enjoy the state's protection

Though India has sought to overcome the inequities of caste and discrimination through affirmative action—reserving quotas in education, government jobs and political bodies—these policies have benefited only a few. The highest office in the land, that of the largely ceremonial President, is today held by a Dalit, K.R. Narayanan. But all the horrors of India's caste system persist at the grassroots; attempts to defy this rigid social order invariably result in violence or economic retaliation.

Perhaps the world's longest surviving social hierarchy, India's caste system entails a complex ordering of social groups on the basis of ritual purity. Attributed to the law-giver Manu, the system was spelt out over 2,000 years ago in the Dharma Shastra, the cornerstone of the Hindu religion.

According to Manu, every individual is born into one of four principal *varnas*, or large categories, and must remain within that caste until death, although the particular ranking of that caste may vary among different regions in the country and over time. In order of precedence, the Brahmins are the priests and teachers, presiding over knowledge and education; the Kshatriyas are the rulers and soldiers; the Vaishyas, merchants and traders; and the Shudras, the peasants, labourers and artisans. The untouchables fall into a fifth category outside the varna system, and were often assigned tasks too "ritually polluting" to merit inclusion within the traditional *varna* system.

Clearly, caste discrimination was an ideological construct that was deployed by the upper castes to create and maintain their monopoly over cultural capital (knowledge and education), social capital ▶

There is no difference among classes of people. All the world is of divine origin.

The Mahabharata, ancient Sanskrit epic

(status and patriarchal domination), political capital (power), and material capital (wealth).

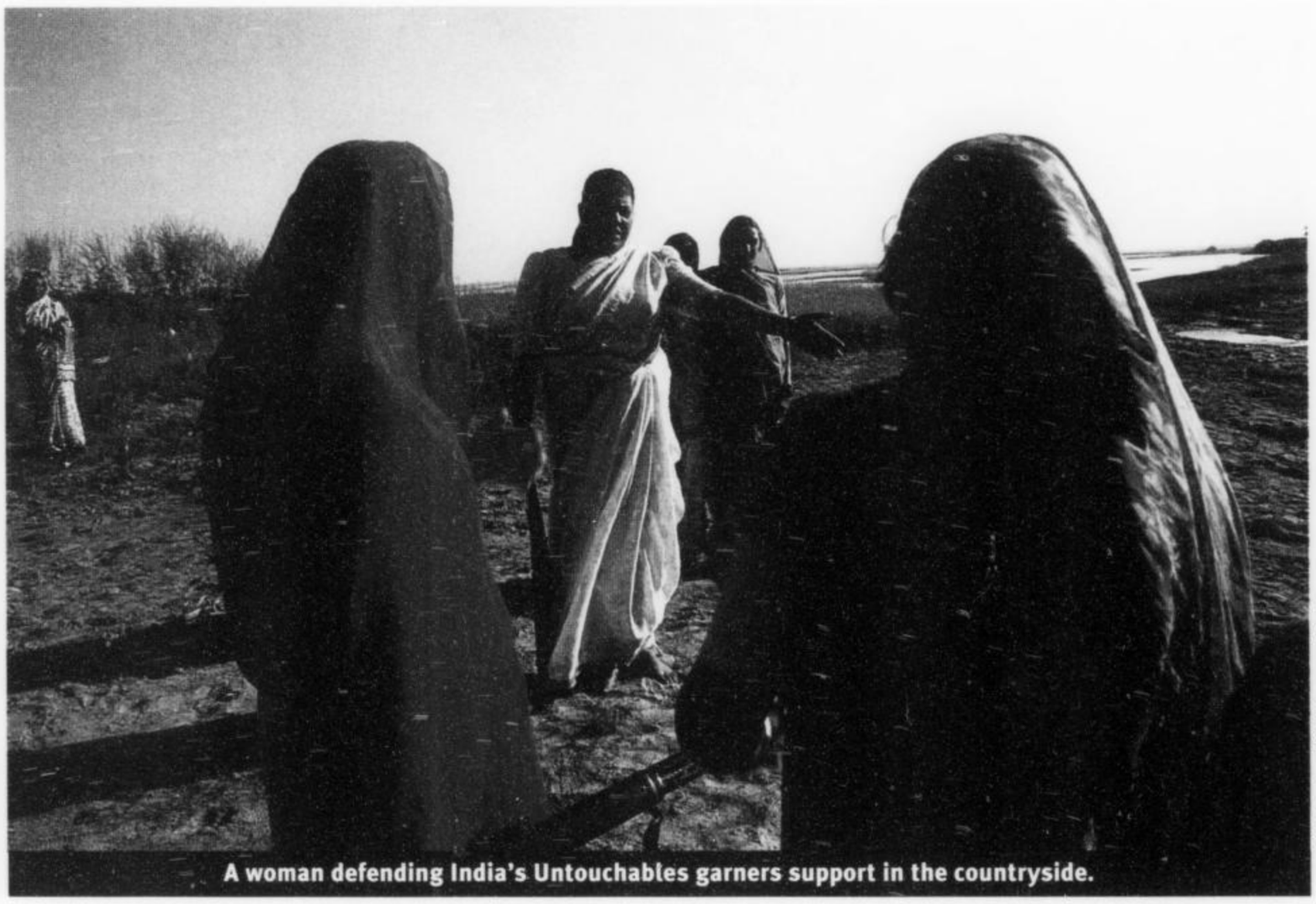
The codes were often pernicious, and rules were bent to suit the upper castes. In northern India, for example, untouchables were forced to use drums to announce their arrival, and even their shadows were thought to be polluting. In the south, some Brahmins stipulated that the lower castes would have to maintain a distance of 65 feet (22 metres) from them in order not to contaminate their betters.

though touching them by accident in the street is a sacrilege.

One of the main reasons why the caste system has survived is because the hierarchical notion of social good it perpetuates is legitimized by the lower castes themselves. They replicate this hierarchy by imitating the cultural values of the upper castes, imposing discrimination on castes even lower than their own. Sociologists claim there are more than 2,000 castes and sub-castes within the five categories. These are called *jatis*, endogamous

There is only one caste—humanity

Pampa, Indian poet and writer, ninth century



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A woman defending India's Untouchables garners support in the countryside.

Yet this caste-based discrimination also had a pragmatic dimension. The untouchables, excluded from the education and books of the Brahmins, were nevertheless allowed to develop their own stores of knowledge, in agriculture or midwifery for example. But there was a catch—this knowledge was only allowed because it benefited the upper castes.

A case of racism?

Caste is still frequently used as a cover for exploitative economic arrangements. Even today, most Dalits are not permitted to cross the invisible "pollution" line that divides their part of the village from that occupied by the higher castes. And yet a Dalit woman, whose very shadow is polluting, is allowed to massage the body of the upper-caste woman she serves. Upper caste men, meanwhile, think nothing of raping Dalit women or consorting with lower-caste prostitutes, even

(inter-marrying) groups that are divided along occupational, sectarian, regional and linguistic lines. Even as outcasts, the Dalits divide themselves into further castes. This proliferation allows for discrimination both horizontally and vertically, thus making social relations all the more rigid and impermeable.

The plight of India's untouchables and the regular human rights abuses against them elicits short-lived public outrage, leaving the state under little pressure to engineer large-scale social change. This is why a coalition of Dalit groups and activists have lobbied hard for their plight to be on the agenda of the UN World Conference against Racism.

"Caste is India's hidden apartheid," says Martin Macwan, 41, convenor of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights. He argues that like racism, caste discrimination is "based on descent."

Their demand has sparked off a national debate about the nature of caste discrimination and

whether other countries should be allowed to interfere in what the Indian government considers "an internal matter."

The government has opposed the inclusion of caste on the UN conference's agenda on the grounds that caste and race are not synonymous. "Race and caste are distinct," insists Soli Sorabjee, India's attorney general and a member of the UN Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination. India, a vigorous campaigner against apartheid, claims that it has done everything possible to grant equality to India's lowest castes. A fifth of the seats in parliament are reserved for members of the scheduled castes (the official term for Dalits), and some states are governed by powerful political parties based on alliances with the lower castes.

Campaigns to end the stigma

Quotas and job allocations, however, have not brought equality, dignity, or even safety for India's "broken people." In villages, the social stigma remains too strong to obliterate by laws alone.

Official figures speak for themselves: recorded crimes and atrocities against the lowest castes averaged 26,000 a year between 1997 and 1999 (the latest figures available). Considering the police are often reluctant even to record claims against the upper castes, these figures expose just the tip of the iceberg.

About two-thirds of the Dalit population are illiterate, and about half are landless agricultural labourers. Only seven percent have access to safe drinking water, electricity and toilets. And a majority of the estimated 40 million bonded labourers (who work as slaves to pay off debts), including 15 million children, are Dalits.

A national campaign to highlight abuses against Dalits was spearheaded by human rights groups in eight Indian states in 1998, and caste has been taken up as an issue internationally for the first time by organizations including Human Rights Watch. While some Dalits have resisted subjugation and discrimination by armed struggle, these are invariably quelled by more powerful upper-caste private militia like the Ranbir Sena in Bihar, which has been held responsible for a series of massacres of poor Dalit peasants and landless labourers.

Macwan agrees that including caste discrimination at the conference's final resolutions would be only a symbolic victory, changing nothing in reality. "The only solution is to change people's minds," he declares. ■

Broken People: Caste Violence against India's Untouchables, published in March 1999 by Human Rights Watch, www.hrw.org

THE BURAKUMIN, JAPAN'S INVISIBLE OUTCASTS

"Japan's smooth social fabric is just an illusion," says Nadamoto Masahisa, who teaches modern history at Kyoto University. "It's still based on invisible castes and as Burakumin, we're at the bottom of the ladder." Alongside his teaching, Masahisa is fighting to defend the Burakumin (or Eta-Hinin, which can be translated as "polluted or dirty non-persons") whom society continues to shun.

The Buraku, as they are also known, were seen until the second half of the 19th century as an "untouchable" minority. Numbering over two million in a country of 126 million people, they live in some 5,000 ghettos, which are the direct result of an official outcast status that was abolished in 1871 at the start of the Meiji era, when the country began industrializing at a rapid pace.

The word Burakumin referred then to those who laboured mainly in slaughterhouses, tanneries, knacker's yards and morgues—people who worked with bodies, carcasses and blood, occupations that are unclean according to Japan's ancient Shinto religion.

All official discrimination against the Buraku has long disappeared. The authorities point to the fact that members of this invisible caste today have the same legal rights as all other Japanese. They have the same physical traits, speak the same language and share the same religion.

But written laws are not always the same as what goes on in people's minds. Masahisa and other militants are campaigning against unofficial discrimination toward the Burakumin by property-owners, estate agents and company officials. "A lot of Japanese think twice before renting to a Burakumin," he says. "If a person is identified as one or says he is, everything becomes harder. If you rent to a Buraku, people say you'll have bad luck."

In modern Japan, the Burakumin are also socially marginalized. "In the 1960s and 1970s, they provided most of the workers in construction and industry," says a lawyer who is fighting against the wage discrimination long practised in large companies against the Burakumin. "Today they're the first victims of the economic crisis." Their concentration in areas such as Osaka and the old imperial capital of Kyoto makes them easier to spot, which only encourages many to deny their social origins. To take one example, an influential politician from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, Hiromu Nonaka, has always denied his connection with the Burakumin.

Even worse, some bourgeois Japanese families make illegal checks on the ancestors of their children's future spouses "to avoid polluting the family," as they put it. They hire special genealogical agencies to comb through the old koseki (family registers) at the prefectures, often with the tacit approval of local officials. ■

Richard Werly, *French journalist based in Japan*

2. THE EXCLUDED

Trouble in the hospitable land

Xenophobia has gained a foothold in Côte d'Ivoire: overcrowded land, common law and economic crisis have spawned a "pro-Ivorian" movement hostile to immigrants from neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso

THEOPHILE KOUAMOUO

FREELANCE FRANCO-CAMEROONIAN JOURNALIST

Things aren't the same any more between Mamadou Ouedraogo and his old school friends and former football chums in the village of Asse, in the fertile black-soiled countryside of eastern Côte d'Ivoire.

"I'm on my guard now," he says bitterly. Mamadou, 37, was born in Côte d'Ivoire but his parents were immigrants from Burkina Faso. The turning-point for him came earlier this year when a strong wave of xenophobia swept the Abouré people, who belong to the Akan, the country's largest ethnic group.

It all started with an argument between a young Abouré and a Burkinabé night watchman at the market in the town of Bonoua. Rumours spread that the "foreigner" had killed "the local man," which set off public fury and attacks on the property of "aliens."

Ousmane Sawadogo, the elderly chieftain of the region's large Burkinabé community, can't forget what happened. "They attacked the Burkinabé district, smashed up and set fire to our shops and broke open our barrels of cooking oil," he says. Several hundred shocked foreigners—mainly Burkinabés and Malians—returned to their countries or moved to friendlier parts of Côte d'Ivoire. Those who decided to stay were abused.

The king of Bonoua warned the immigrants to stop growing pineapples, the province's main resource. "Several young Abouré then went round the farms to check which foreigners were still growing them," says Sawadogo's son Boukari. "If they were, the Abouré marked the fields with stakes and red cloth and then returned to destroy the crops."

Envy and the soil

Bonoua is not the only place in Côte d'Ivoire where this happens. Land disputes, once the norm between local people and Ivorians from other parts of the country, are now the commonest form of violence between Ivorians and foreigners. At the end of 1999, more than 20,000 Burkinabés fled by the busload from the southwestern region of Tabou after a dispute over land ownership between an immigrant and a local farmer degenerated into bloodshed.

At Blolequin, in the westernmost part of the country, six people, including a policeman, were killed early this year. But the local authorities managed to keep the foreigners on their land, against the advice of local elected officials and despite public protests.

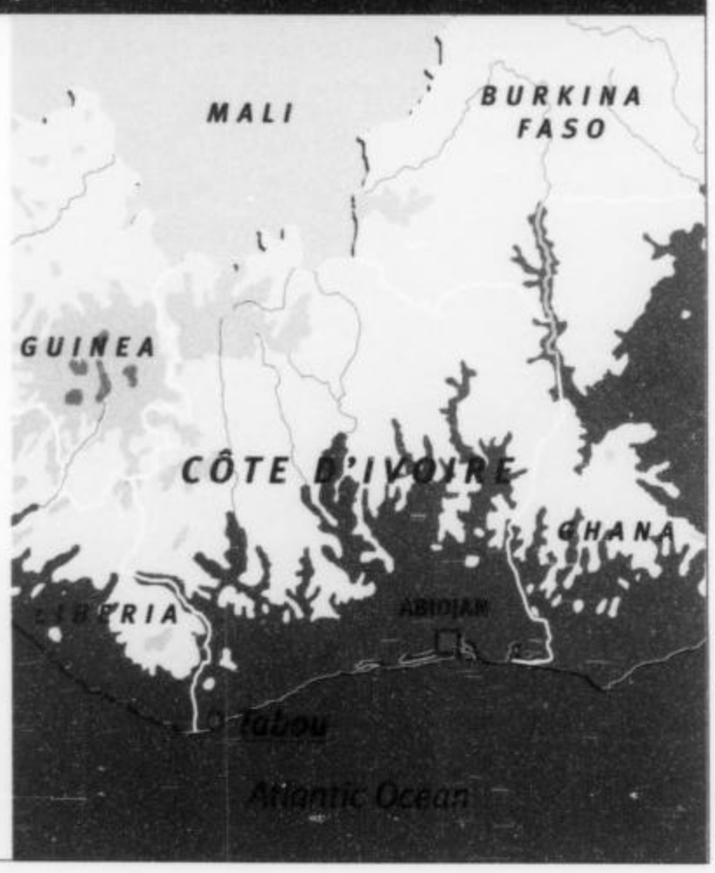
Why this upsurge of xenophobia in what the Ivorian national anthem calls "the land of hospitality"?

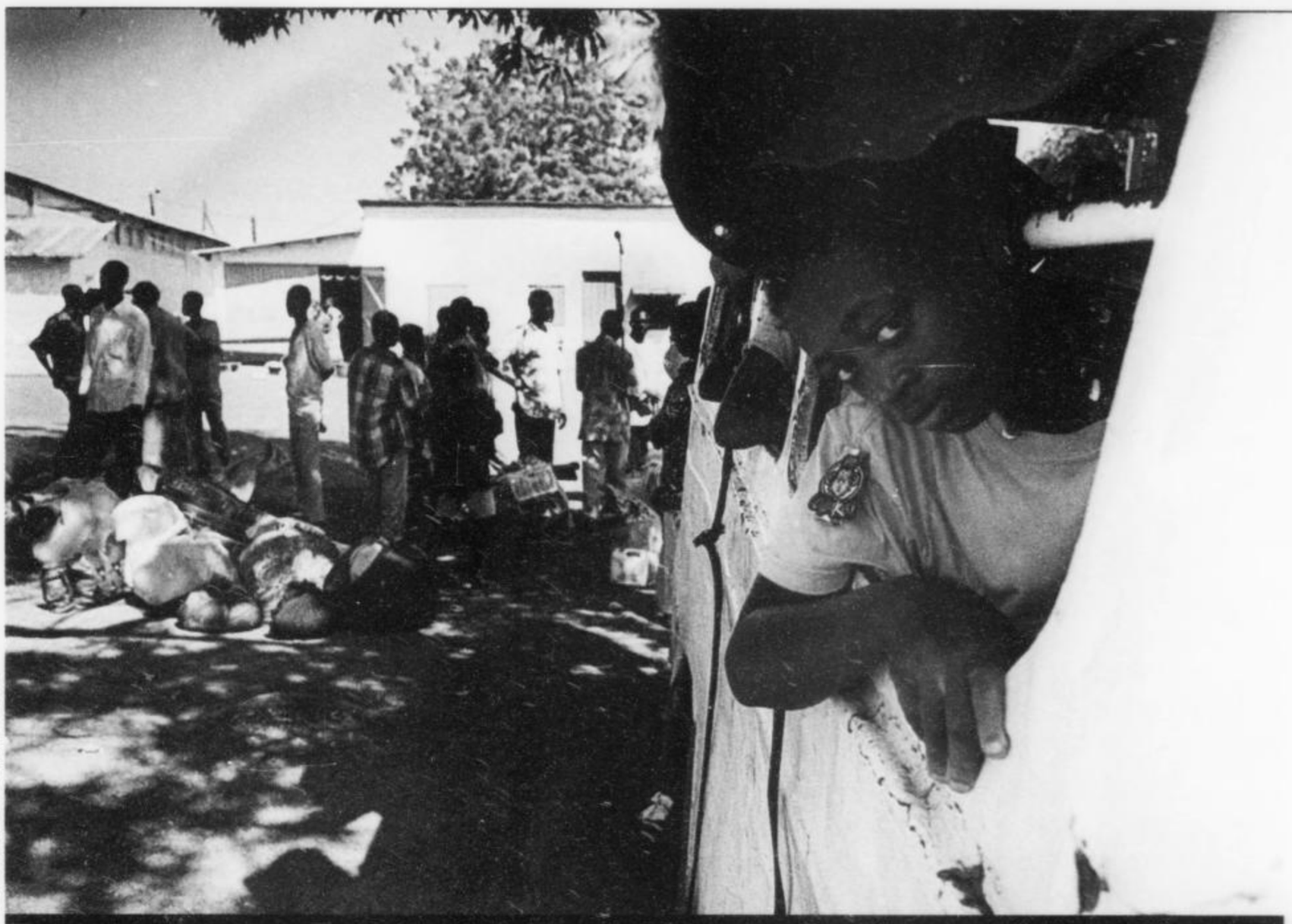
Until the end of colonial rule in 1960, French authorities encouraged the immigration of workers from the Sahel to help develop agriculture. This continued during the long rule of Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the "father of the nation," who liked to say that "the land belongs to those who make use of it." The "president-farmer," who entered politics through rural trade unions, had mainly economic ambitions. "Côte d'Ivoire could never have become the world's biggest cocoa producer if it had just used Ivorian labour,"

KEY DATA, CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Population (millions)	16
Surface area (thousand sq. km)	322
Gross national income per capita ($)	1,654
Life expectancy at birth (years)	48
Adult literacy rate (%)	46
Population below 15 years of age (% of total)	43

Source: World Bank, UNDP. All data 1999.





© J.-P. Ksiazek/STF/AFP, Paris

In 1999, over 20,000 Burkinabés fled from the Tabou region after a dispute over land ownership.

says Jean-Paul Chausse, an expert with the World Bank.

Today, Côte d'Ivoire has a very high proportion of resident foreigners—26 percent of the total population, according to officials, and more than 35 percent according to other estimates. Their presence caused no problem during Houphouët-Boigny's rule, a time of prosperity that lasted until the end of the Cold War for this faithful ally of the West. But as economic recession set in, relations with immigrants deteriorated.

Their success irritates the locals. "They say we've got rich, have big cars and that we don't respect them any more," says Boukari. "They say they don't want to see us with their women any more and if a foreigner's caught with an Abouré woman, he gets fined about $200."

"Before," grumbles Niamkey Eloi, an Ivorian farmer from Asse, "the Burkinabé didn't ask for anything, they simply worked for us."

With the economic crisis and the austerity imposed by international financial institutions, many Ivorians can no longer get work in the towns, either as government employees or in the private sector, so they fall back on the soil. "We're seeing competition for land now as a result of land overcrowding," says Chausse. "These days, many fathers don't leave more than a hectare or two of land to their children because they've already sold most of what they had." Deforestation and the expansion of towns have speeded up this process.

At Bonoua, in the Akan country, the tradition of matriarchy exacerbates the problem. "Young uneducated people return to the village to find their parents' lands controlled by their maternal uncles, who are the rightful heirs under common law," says deputy prefect Julie Aka Sonoh. "They don't agree with that but they can't challenge their own uncles. So they divert their aggression and target the foreigners these lands have been rented to."

In this explosive situation, Houphouët-Boigny's successor, Henri Konan Bédié, who was overthrown by the army in December 1999, introduced the notion of "*Ivoirité*," a reference to native-born Ivorians. The goal: to force out of the electoral race his old rival in the shadow of the "father of the nation," the economist and former prime minister Alassane Ouattara, on the grounds that one of his parents came from neighbouring Burkina Faso, where he had been educated.

A new legal solution?

To some, the aim was to forge a common identity for the country's 60 or so ethnic groups, to others it was a nationalist ploy. Either way it stirred up a strong brew of intercommunal bitterness. In Abidjan, the political debate revolved around foreigners, who were accused of being the secret weapon of Ouattara's Republican Rally party and became the scapegoat for the turbulent election campaign.

Laurent Gbagbo, leader of the social-democratic Ivorian Popular Front, was elected president in October 2000 and made the land question his top priority. To solve the problem, the government decided to enact the rural land law, passed unanimously by parliament in 1998, which ▶

All the pots have been fired in the same way and in the same kiln, yet they are different, for the pigment takes on some better than others. . . and the colour varies in beauty.

Proverb from the Mongo tribe, Congo

said Ivorians owned all the land but could rent it to foreigners.

The law is broadly based on various common law systems, under which "land belonged to the ancestors," explains Chausse.

"The right to use it could be sold but not the land itself. In the southwest, for example, access to land is easier. Foreigners were able to negotiate a deal which was nearly as good as ownership."

Henceforth, foreigners who have acquired land can keep it until they die, after which their children can rent it from the state. Burkinabé President Blaise Compaoré recently expressed concern that it could deprive Burkinabé in Côte d'Ivoire of "their" land.

"The law has its good sides but it's also dangerous," says Chausse. "It wants to clarify things and encourage settlement of disputes. If it's properly applied, it can settle many things. But if it's abused, it will exacerbate tension between local people and foreigners." ■

MASSIVE EXPULSIONS IN AFRICA

1958 *Côte d'Ivoire*: Expulsion of 10,000 natives of Dahomey (present-day Benin).

1969 *Ghana*: Flight of nearly one million people.

1983 *Nigeria*: Flight of 1.5 million citizens from West African countries.

1985 *Nigeria*: Expulsion of 700,000 citizens from Ghana, Niger and other countries.

1985 *Côte d'Ivoire*: 10,000 Ghanaians expelled.

1993 *South Africa*: Expulsion of some 80,000 Mozambicans.

1994 *South Africa*: Expulsion of 90,000 citizens from other African countries.

1995 *Gabon*: Forced flight of 55,000 foreigners.

1998 *Ethiopia*: Expulsion of 50,000 Eritreans.

DRISS EL YAZAMI*:
BLACK AFRICA: "ETHNIC HATRED" IS NOT INEVITABLE

In the early 1970s, there were approximately 700,000 refugees in black Africa; 20 years later, that figure had soared to over six million[1]. Today nearly one in every three Africans is a refugee on the African continent. Forced displacements and the destabilization of populations have rocked Africa more than any other part of the world in recent years. Around seven million Africans are internally displaced (within their own country), while traditional or new economic immigration flows have further swollen the number of refugees. Waves of xenophobia in several black African countries must be understood in this context (see box). Periodic droughts drive hundreds of thousands of people from their homes, but geopolitical changes within and between states do even more to bring about these population transfers and the human rights violations underpinning them.

Obviously, the sudden, massive arrival of hundreds of thousands of foreigners in a neighbouring African country already struggling to feed its own population can be source of tension and rejection. However, the generosity of the African countries that offer first asylum is striking. For example, in the 1990s, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire welcomed over a million people fleeing the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Ten years later, most of them have still neither gone back home nor found a permanent place to live.

The wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone were emblematic in many ways. They have often been portrayed as having an "ethnic" component, but the desire to control economic resources—wood smuggling in Liberia and diamond trafficking in Sierra Leone, with the active complicity of multinational corporations—is also a cause of these conflicts and a means to finance them.

In both cases, the protagonists, backed by foreign parties and neighbouring or even geographically distant countries, took the war outside national borders: refugee camps were used as bases for revenge. The climate of insecurity that often prevails in them, the remote prospects of settling permanently in a wealthier country, the international community's indifference and even disengagement, in contrast, for example, to what happened in Kosovo and East Timor, fuel the flames of revenge. Recruits are easier to enlist for the next round of violence, sparking a new exodus.

The widespread destabilization of populations is more to blame for African xenophobia than "ethnic hatred." States that have been frail since their creation, because their national borders seldom match historical and cultural realities, are further weakened by corruption and their inability to ensure development. The Cold War's "conflicts by proxy" have been replaced by new conflicts, used by the more powerful African states, that play the ethnic card and give that dimension a charge of hatred and rejection that is far from spontaneous. In the final analysis, the "struggle for power" over which "groups, movements and clans fight, often ruthlessly," is the driving force behind ethnic conflict.

Cast as "tribal wars," these conflicts and their attendant human rights violations and hatred might last unless the world's conscience feels moved or responsible. The genocide in Rwanda was the cruellest proof of this. ■

* *Secretary general of the International Federation for Human Rights (IFHR).*

1. Refugees by numbers 2000 edition, *UNHCR, 2000*
2. *Gildas Simon*, Géodynamique des migrations internationales, *PUF, Paris, 1995*

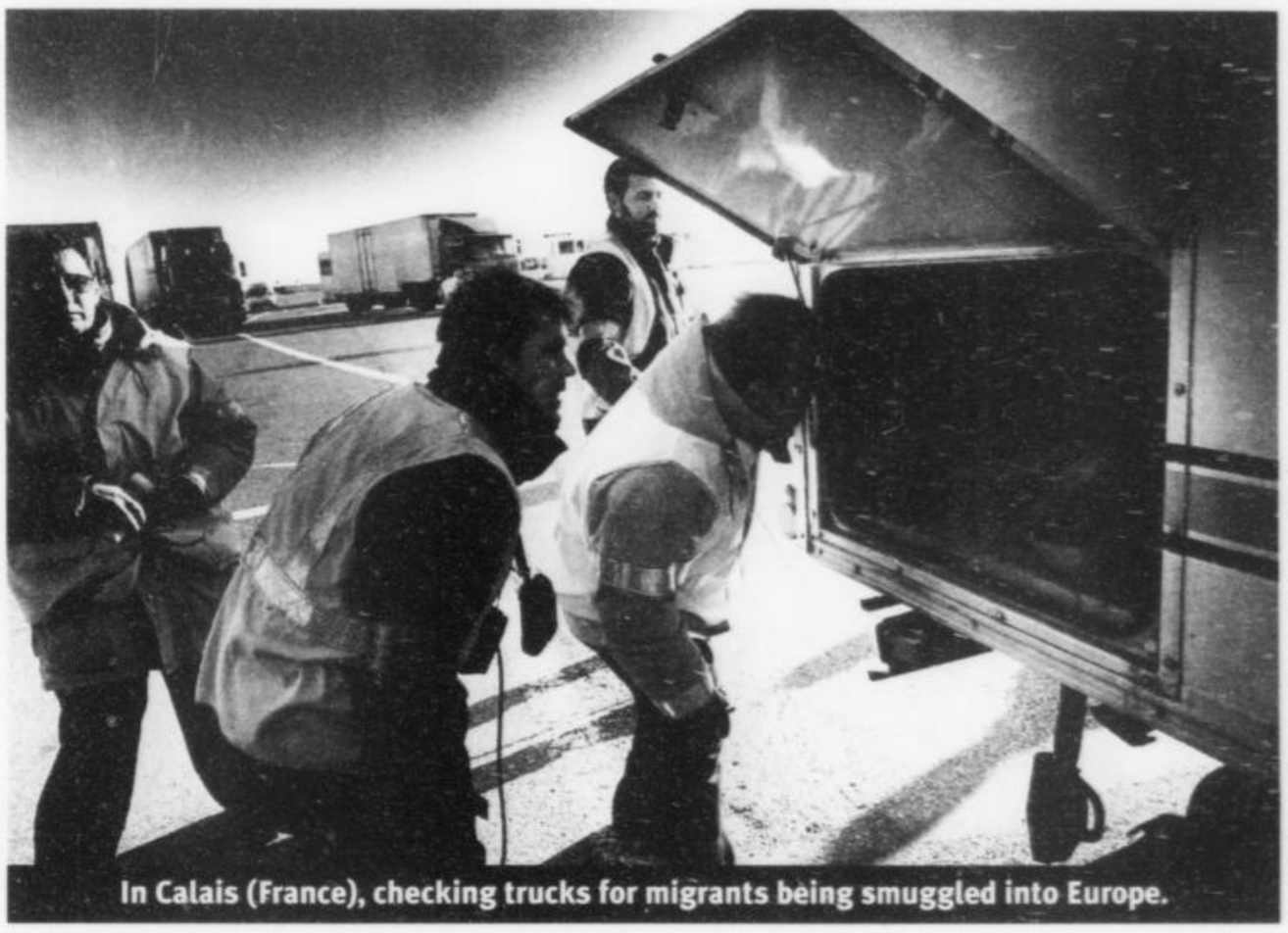
2. THE EXCLUDED

Fortress Europe bids you welcome

Europe's governments are struggling to stem the flow of migrants from poor countries while opening the gates wide for the best of the world's workers. Is their policy tenable?

IVAN BRISCOE

Unesco Courier journalist



In Calais (France), checking trucks for migrants being smuggled into Europe.

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When Huzefa Hundekari decided it was time for a change of scene, the doors of Western Europe swung invitingly open. Helped by some very co-operative immigration officials and the promise of a hefty salary, this 29-year-old Indian manager in a multinational IT firm glided into his new posting in Frankfurt. "They have a defined process laid out. They require a set of papers, then you get your green card. It does not take more than 15 to 20 days."

From the perspective of a vast squat in central Paris, Hundekari's experiences seem closer to a work of fiction. Ten years ago, Mamadou Traore, now aged 35, fled for a new life. Coming from Mali, he crossed several thousand kilometres of desert, ventured through Algeria just as civil war was beginning, crossed the Mediterranean in a perilous dinghy, and arrived in Paris three months later, penniless and not knowing a soul.

Unfortunately for Traore, French immigration officials rarely give visas for effort. His applications for legal residency have been refused three times. Now he lives frugally with 350 others, all in similar straits. "At any time we could be arrested or deported. You always have to prepare for the worst."

Wanted: "the best brains"

To judge from these rival experiences, no single account can now be given of immigration to Europe. Whereas Hundekari has profited from a desperate effort by the German government to reinforce the new economy, Traore and an estimated four million other illegal migrants in the European Union live hand-to-mouth, shunned by governments and by the citizens of their host countries.

Open to the skilled, restricted for the poor and even the persecuted, Western Europe is conceiving a new model of welcome. "We do not consider immigration to be just a burden any more, but an enrichment," declared Rita Süssmuth, head of an official German commission that has called for up to 200,000 visas to be handed out each year, preferably to the "best brains." For the first time in 30 years, governments are championing the economic utility of non-Europeans. But the question remains: if migrants are gauged on their use, then what becomes of their status?

"Europe has not escaped from what seems to be the destiny of all areas experiencing rapid growth: the need to bring in labour supplies from outside," wrote the American sociologist Saskia Sassen in her book, *Guests and Aliens* (New Press, 2000). Indeed the past 200 years of European history have been rich in mass movement and its usual companion, xenophobic hatred: Poles, Slavs and Jews moved West in number in the 19th century, earning a wary reception from host countries that showed much less reluctance in peopling colonies and dispatching 50 million migrants across the Atlantic prior to 1914. Following the devastating racial politics of the next three decades, Europe resumed its normal labour-absorbing course, this time recruiting workers from Asia, Africa and the Middle East in unprecedented quantities—around 70 million, including those who returned to their countries of origin—for the job of postwar reconstruction.

The downturn of the 1970s put a swift end to all that. Workers were no longer free to come, only relatives of those already settled and asylum-seekers. Unemployment and prejudice in turn nurtured a virulent right-wing backlash in France, Germany and Britain, the main countries at risk of being "swamped."

For today's political elite, the lessons of those decades are still fresh. Buoyant economic performance may well have blunted the extremists' appeal, but ▶

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An assembly in the teeming quarters of a hostel for immigrant workers on the outskirts of Paris.

containment of numbers remains a critical part of immigration policy. For EU ministers, this means whittling down the 390,000 asylum applications made last year and halting the unregistered human cargo—if only, as they claim, to protect immigrants' well-being.

"Those who co-operate on this issue at the European level are from interior and justice ministries," explains Virginie Guiraudon, an expert in migration policy from the University of Lille. "For them, immigration policy means immigration control. As long as these people control the agenda, there's no reason to see any change in the repressive policy, meaning most decisions are about illegal migration, human smuggling, barrier sanctions or restricting asylum."

Yet despite the ministers' best efforts, the flow of people does not seem to have relented. The world counts an estimated 21 million refugees, mostly displaced by war or political breakdown. Only a tiny proportion are now in Europe, but the spread of global media, means of transport and sharply widening inequality between the developing world and Europe—historically the most fundamental cause of mass migration—promises to deliver many more people like Traore to the shores of affluence.

The danger of opening the doors to this exodus, politicians maintain, lies in Europe's perennial spectre—the draconian right. Vlaams Bok is one such political force. Founded in 1977 as a Flemish nationalist party, its policies towards Belgium's migrant population call for total closure of borders, immediate deportation of all illegal migrants, summary expulsion of any foreigner who has turned to crime. "Immigrants don't adapt," declares Philippe Van Der Sande, spokesman for the party in Antwerp, where it won 33 percent of the vote in 1999 elections. "They don't want to learn the language. They are not interested in our culture but just winning easy money."

The far right's new clothes

Opinions like these can be heard in all European countries, and have even risen to government rank in Austria. Yet in place of the boisterous nationalism that characterized the previous generation of far-right parties, groups like Vlaams Bok take a defensive posture: the party is not racist, Van Der Sande says, but only wishes to preserve what Flemish society has laboured to achieve. "We Europeans are a minority in the world, and we are considered to have a good welfare system. If we give the impression that everyone is welcome here, millions of people will want to come."

For modern Europe's far right—and for sizeable minorities of the population in France, Belgium, Germany and Scandinavia according to surveys—the immigrant may be avaricious, bedridden, criminal or simply a job-stealer, selfishly milking the society that happens to be richer. As critics point out, the far-right's rhetoric on immigration now differs from that of governments only by a matter of degree.

The irony is that the debate has moved back into the economists' camp: far from crippling a high quality

of welfare, immigrants are now touted as possibly the way to preserve living standards in an ageing Europe. The UN Population Division claims that 13.5 million new migrants are needed each year to keep Europe's ratio of workers and pensioners steady.

Until now, certain businesses have clamoured for unimpeded access to the global labour market. Shortages in new technological industries have already toppled Germany's 30-year freeze on foreign labour. The rest of Europe is chasing alongside, while bumped-up quotas for the exceptionally computer-gifted have been brandished by Australia, Japan and the United States. Recession in Silicon Valley, however, may have slammed one door shut: 400,000 foreigners are believed to be at risk of losing their jobs. Each sacked worker will have 10 days to leave the country.

Closed borders, an invitation to slavery

Yet it is not only high skills that Europe has been searching. As expectations of comfortable desk-jobs have become the norm, workers to fill more gruelling vacancies are also lacking. And it is here that the current immigration policy shows its deepest contradictions. Several countries now run quotas for these jobs: Italy plans 83,000 visas this year for farm labourers while Spain indulges migrant house-cleaners. But there are few illusions as to where the bulk of this cheap labour is going to come from. "In construction, packaging and agriculture it's the same all over Europe. Nobody wants to pick up asparagus who's not an illegal migrant any more," observes Guiraudon.

Cheap, utterly unprotected by the law and willing to work in the most menial conditions, illegal migrants are some employers' ideal candidates. Though Traore has been refused his visa three times, never have the French authorities sought to stop him from working, nor, he insists, from paying social security contributions for services he was never eligible to use.

"Closing the frontiers serves above all else to make slaves," argues Jean-Pierre Alaux, an official at GISTI, a Paris-based NGO that helps immigrants. "People are going to arrive all the same: all the interior ministers know it, and all the bosses know it."

The critical question for Europe's governments and peoples is whether this opening of borders, *sotto voce* and driven by purely economic criteria, is the best way to create well-integrated societies. Riots in several northern English cities have proved in the last few months that even communities dating from the post-war migrant influx can continue in utter segregation. For many pro-migrant activists, the danger is that the new economic opening will simply reinforce a deep-seated racism. "In some part of our collective cultural mentality in the West, we've kept a certain number of values which are the same as from the time of slavery," argues Alaux. "For us, the South is a sort of raw material."

A chilling demonstration of these prejudices came last year, when the murder of a native woman by a mentally disturbed Moroccan labourer triggered anti-migrant riots in the Spanish town of El Ejido. For years, workers have come from North Africa to farms that have brought an unprecedented wealth to this desert region. Necessary or not, these illegal labourers live apart, often in shacks without water and electricity, paid pitifully little and despised by the local agricultural elite. "There's an expression local people use: they say let [the migrants] cross the straits, take a wash, so long as they throw away the water and become Spanish," reports Antonio Puertas, president of the local NGO Almeria Acoge.

"How do you get accepted here? Even if you could, do you really want to drop your sense of self, whiten your skin and become a Christian?" wonders Traore.

Though Europe has managed to create a few urban centres of multi-racial harmony, cultural discrimination and economic segregation, shown at its extreme in El Ejido, have proved much harder to overcome. In closing borders, referring all justification for immigration back to economics, establishing quotas and limiting rights to permanent settlement—even for the highly skilled—governments might appear to be accentuating the view that foreigners are second-class citizens and potential parasites. As Guiraudon points out, one country that has heavily depended on quotas of short-term foreign labour is Switzerland, also one of the last countries to pass a law on racial integration.

But there are many other imponderables. Will the pension crisis be as severe as the UN expects? Could an enlarged Europe with freedom of movement for a largely white population harden prejudices against non-EU migrants or assuage them? Might recession trigger a violent anti-migrant movement that even reaches the professional echelons (as occurred during the Jewish exodus from the Nazis)? Only one thing is certain, namely that an old adage will be relived in one shape or form: "We asked for workers but got people instead." ■

I am the colour of those who are persecuted.

Alphonse de Lamartine, French poet (1790-1869)

THE ROAD TO ASYLUM

For most migrants arriving in developed countries, seeking asylum remains the only way to secure a right to stay. Last year, 390,000 people applied for asylum in Europe. A similar total is expected for 2001, with figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees suggesting that Germany and Britain will remain the principle receivers, while Afghanistan, Turkey and Iraq continue as the main countries of origin.

Western European countries have responded with strict border controls and rejection of up to 90 percent of asylum claims, often arguing that the migrants are driven by pure economic necessity. British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw has even called for the 1951 Geneva Convention to be amended in light of these supposed abuses. But the migrants have not stopped—from the 16 Romanians found under a Eurostar in early August, to the 908 Kurds whose boat grounded on the French Riviera in February, to the dozens who cross from Morocco every day. Once in Europe, the migrants can expect possible detention (1,000 asylum seekers are in British jails), illegal work, administrative indifference and public contempt. According to Arun Kundnani of the London-based Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, official "demonization of asylum seekers" has fostered "a new, popular racism." ■

A **return** to nature

Is it possible to gauge the influence of globalization and mass migration on the future of racist thought? Alberto Burgio*, a leading Italian analyst of racism, examines the ethnic panorama

INTERVIEW BY IVAN BRISCOE

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

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Illegal asylum seekers from t

What do you believe are the fundamental sources of racism in the world?

The first thing we must be clear about is that racism as an ideology is a product of the modern world. Obviously history has given us many examples of violence between different human groups, but not until the modern era was this violence justified by reference to racist thinking. In my opinion, the link is the following: modernity is characterized by forces that are inclusive and universal, while in practice—in political, social and military affairs—it is discriminatory. This contradiction is partly resolved by a racist ideology which excludes groups of peoples who are defined as essentially different.

In your opinion, has globalization accentuated racism or reduced it?

It's difficult to give a very general answer, but I have the impression that at the moment the main effect of the process is to increase racism. The reason for this is fairly simple: globalization is a classic example of modernity. It's clearly unifying the world, but on a hierarchical and exclusive basis. Remember that when we talk about globalization we are talking largely about the unification of money markets, speculative financial flows, information and the organization of production. But the same definitely does not go for the movement of people. Somehow this contradiction between the free movement of money and the segmentation of the world must be justified, and this is done by reference to supposed natural differences.

Do you believe that the outbreaks of racism observed in Africa, Asia and Europe all stem from the same causes?

No two examples of racism are the same since their historical contexts are always different. Having said that, I believe it is possible to say how racism functions in general: namely, as a naturalization of identity that aims to legitimate the discriminatory treatment of different groups, leading in extreme cases to those groups' destruction or genocide. But though we can make such a generalization, we are still obliged to study each case for its particular historical origins. It's clear that in Asia and Africa there are racist phenomena that are strongly influenced by globalization, and are thus similar to the racism characteristic of Europe and the Americas. But there are also violent ethnic conflicts that stem from the specific histories of those continents.

You have stressed the role, especially in European politics, of the "demographic factor." What exactly do you mean by this?

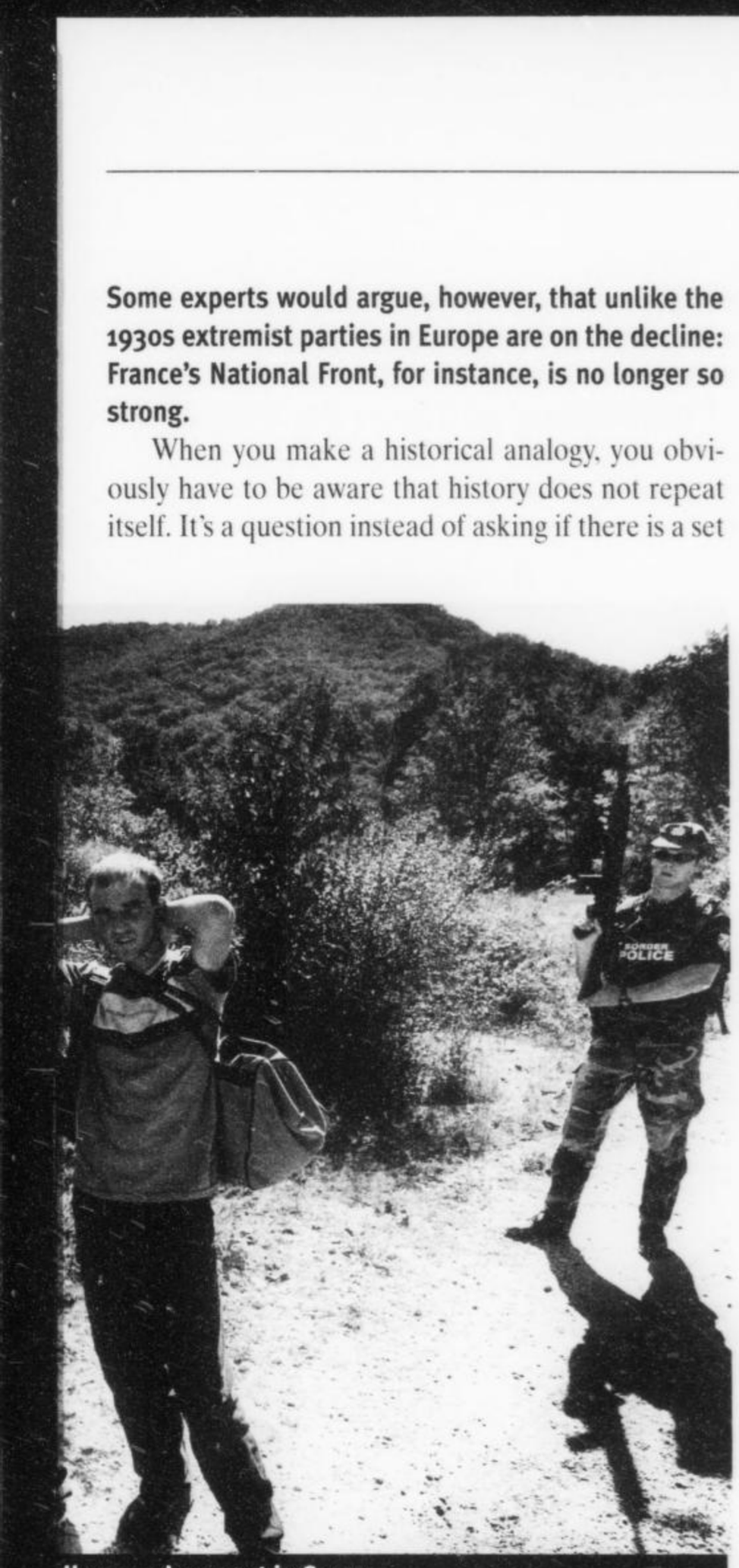
Racism can't be understood as the simple consequences of demographic pressure—it's not a mechanical phenomenon. Large migratory fluxes have become a real problem for the first time in 50 years. And though "south to south" migration barely makes the news—being seen as a minor aspect of the "new world order"—the dismemberment of Yugoslavia drew attention to supposed masses of refugees. This has transformed demographics into a critical element on European governments' political agendas.

In my recent work, I develop an analogy between Europe today and in the1930s. It's clear that we have been pushed back to one of the principle historical features of that time, when the idea of mass deportation or social engineering was considered a fundamental part of geopolitics.

* *Professor of the history of ideas at the University of Bologna, author of* L'Invenzione delle Razze *[The Invention of Races],* I volumi *(1998) and* La Guerra delle Razze *[The Race Wars], (2001)*

Some experts would argue, however, that unlike the 1930s extremist parties in Europe are on the decline: France's National Front, for instance, is no longer so strong.

When you make a historical analogy, you obviously have to be aware that history does not repeat itself. It's a question instead of asking if there is a set of shared phenomena which can help us find our way around contemporary politics. I point to three such phenomena, which I believe were extremely important in the 1930s and continue to be very heavily present in the first years of the new century.



lkans under arrest in Greece.

Firstly, war has returned to the heart of Europe through the Balkans, and is once again seen as a real political option by European and Western governments. Secondly, as I mentioned earlier, demographics and frontier protection have become key parts of government policy, especially for the European Union since the implementation of the Schengen accords in 1995. Thirdly, racism has become once again an ideological weapon, and the representation of social and political relations in ethnic terms has become an ideological means of producing consensus in Western democratic societies. Not only in Austria, Switzerland or Belgium, but also in Britain, Germany and France: in March 2000, over 60 percent of French people admitted in a survey to holding racist opinions.

In Italy and other countries there has been earnest debate over the issue of national culture and its protection. Is this is just a cover for racist prejudices or a reflection of wider concerns?

If an Italian like me compares myself with a French citizen, I can obviously talk about my eating habits, my lifestyle, my tastes, indeed everything which distinguishes an Italian from another nationality, without necessarily being racist. But there is a point when the discussion becomes racist, and that is when one says these differences are too large to be eliminated, they are too large to allow people to live together as equals.

Turning to the Muslims and Arab peoples in Italy, it's said that the culture of these people is not only different from our own, but also prevents them from integrating. Therefore assimilation in a democratic country where everyone is equal before the law becomes impossible. The ambiguity of the racist stance is that it acknowledges essential human characteristics—it talks of culture, of religion, of history, of traditions—yet treats all of these as if they were only aspects of nature. It translates what is historical into what is natural, and thus impossible to change.

Giacomo Biffi, the Archbishop of Bologna, has clearly stated that we must welcome only immigrants who come from Christian countries, starting with Filipinos since they are Catholics. And it's not just Biffi. An important writer and political scientist called Giovanni Sartori, who lived for several years in the United States and taught at Columbia University, has written a book saying exactly the same thing.

Do you believe the coming years will see increased exploitation of racism at the political level?

It's difficult to make predictions. If the hawkish approach to governing globalization wins—by which I mean that of a confrontation between poor and rich—I believe we will see years of hard conflict, and amid this conflict there is sure to be a violent rejection of the continuous flow of people coming to the richer parts of the world. These conflicts will also be interpreted politically by the right, namely by the political entrepreneurs of spontaneous racism.

But there is also the possibility, or rather the hope, that leaders of the richest and most powerful countries try to govern these differences between the rich and poor parts of the world in a less violent and more reasonable way. This is unfortunately less likely than the first option, but if it occurs, we may see a progressive reduction in the problem of racism.

Can anything be done to combat racism in individual countries rather than at the global level?

Anti-racist campaigns must be rooted in the concrete reality of different countries or regions, otherwise you can make only moral platitudes—and no-one needs those. Instead we need to be able to make practical interventions in real situations. The United Nations and other large organizations must continue to make governments aware of this problem, as must world public opinion. ■

The child in arms

Myanmar's protracted civil and ethnic wars have forced one of the highest number of children in the world onto the battlefield, bringing them face to face with beatings, murder and a blossoming drugs trade

Per Ler, a 13-year-old child recruited by the God's Army, a Karen militia.

© Thierry Falise, Bangkok

BERTIL LINTNER

SENIOR WRITER,
FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW

Brang Ja (not his real name) was only 16 when he was enlisted in the Myanmar army in 1997. But the decision wasn't his. He was on his way to visit his mother in the far north of Myanmar when the police arrested him in the city of Mandalay because he wasn't carrying any identification papers.

Two months later, military policemen visited him in jail and offered him a way out by joining the army. He agreed, fearing that he would otherwise remain in jail for years. One of the officers remarked that he was "at the best age to begin military training." But when he and other released prisoners arrived at a military training camp in the northern town of Shwebo, they found that some recruits were as young as nine. A few of them had tried to escape from the camp, but no one had succeeded.

After serving in one of Myanmar's numerous civil wars between its myriad ethnic groups, Brang Ja managed to flee through the jungle to Thailand, where he related his experiences.

Since 1988, when the military brutally suppressed a nation-wide uprising for democracy, the strength of Myanmar's armed forces has more than doubled, from about 185,000 men to 450,000 today. The officially stated goal is to build a 500,000-strong army to crush the widespread ethnic unrest and stifle any popular dissent.

Myanmar (formerly Burma) is the only country in East Asia that is expanding its military instead of reducing it. This rapid growth has been possible because children are routinely recruited. The total number of child soldiers here is difficult to estimate. But observers guess that at least 50,000 children are engaged in military activity. Many of these boys are kidnapped or forcibly conscripted into the Tatmadaw (the Burmese name for the armed forces), and about half this number serve in the private armies of various ethnic groups. The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (see interview p. 40) believes that Myanmar "rivals parts of Africa as one of the largest recruiters of child soldiers" in the world.

A 1992 document from UNICEF states that 14-year-olds are officially conscripted. Placed in military camps for training, they are called "Ye Nyunt Lunge," or "Brave Sprout Youth."

These recruits are often expected to perform the same duties as adult soldiers, and may be beaten or killed if they are not able to do so. Children are sometimes used in frontline combat or in dangerous human-wave attacks, in which hundreds have been killed. Others are used to dig trenches, cook or serve as porters carrying ammunition and supplies. According to a report entitled "No Childhood at All?" by Images Asia, an NGO based in Chiang Mai (Thailand), most child soldiers have never attended school or were pulled out after just a few years.

A "mother and father" army

"Many of us were only 14 or 15 years old," says an unnamed child soldier, quoted in the report. "There were three or four soldiers who were only 12...they couldn't carry their rifles properly, they were so small, but they had to do the same training as regular soldiers. Chiko, a 12-year-old, served as an attendant to a corporal. One day, he was beaten up really badly by him and sent to hospital. He ended up blind and half-paralyzed from it... I actually saw this beating."

Street children and orphans are particularly vulnerable and are taught that the army is their only "mother and father." The UNICEF report identified at least one military camp near Kengtung in eastern Shan state. It noted that children as young as seven were being trained and used as "porters, human shields or human mine-sweepers."

The Images Asia report is replete with examples of atrocities against Myanmar's child soldiers. Aung Tay, 14, talks about a drunk battalion commander who shot three boys while they slept because they did not obey his command to wake up. "They couldn't wake up because they had

Key Data

Population (millions):	45
Surface area (thousand sq. km.)	677
Gross national income per capita ($):	1,027
Life expectancy at birth (years)	56
Adult literacy rate (%)	84
Population below 15 years of age (% of total)	33

All data 1999. Sources: World Bank, UNDP.

been making bricks all night and were exhausted," Aung Tay says.

The report says most child soldiers have either witnessed murders or been forced to kill and plunder. During an offensive in Mawchi, Kayah state, Aye Myint and a band of boy soldiers "entered a village and shot all the villagers, because we thought of them as our enemies. We took all their pigs and chickens, all usable goods…then we burnt the village. We took all the women and raped them, and finally we murdered them."

Some child soldiers join the army willingly to protect their families from the army or to provide a much-needed income. These perceived "benefits" are rarely realized, especially when child soldiers are stationed far from their own villages. Child recruits are underpaid or not paid at all due to rampant corruption in the military. "They are forced to grow up too quickly," says Ma Mi Suu Pwint, a female soldier in a resistance militia (All-Burma Students' Democratic Front), quoted in the report.

"I joined the military in 1993, when I was 16," says Tai Ling Aung, a fisherman's son, quoted in the report. "My family was very poor and I had to join the Tatmadaw to support them."

The plight of Myanmar's children has been highlighted in recent reports by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. The lack of educational opportunities for young recruits only compounds the grave economic and social problems affecting the country.

Since Myanmar's independence from Britain in 1948, several of the country's ethnic minorities, who make up an estimated 40 percent of the population, have been fighting for autonomy or outright separation. This tragedy is seen as the main reason why Myanmar, a country with no real external enemies, began to build up a strong army as early as the 1950s. In 1962, the army seized direct power over the state in a coup d'état and began to rule by decree, abolishing Myanmar's fragile parliamentary system. The military also introduced a disastrous policy called "The Burmese Way to Socialism," which turned what had once been one of Asia's most prosperous countries into a political and economic wreck.

A narcotics militia

Annual resolutions by the United Nations urging the military to open a dialogue with the opposition have produced few tangible results, despite recent efforts by the UN's special envoy to Myanmar, Razali Ismail.

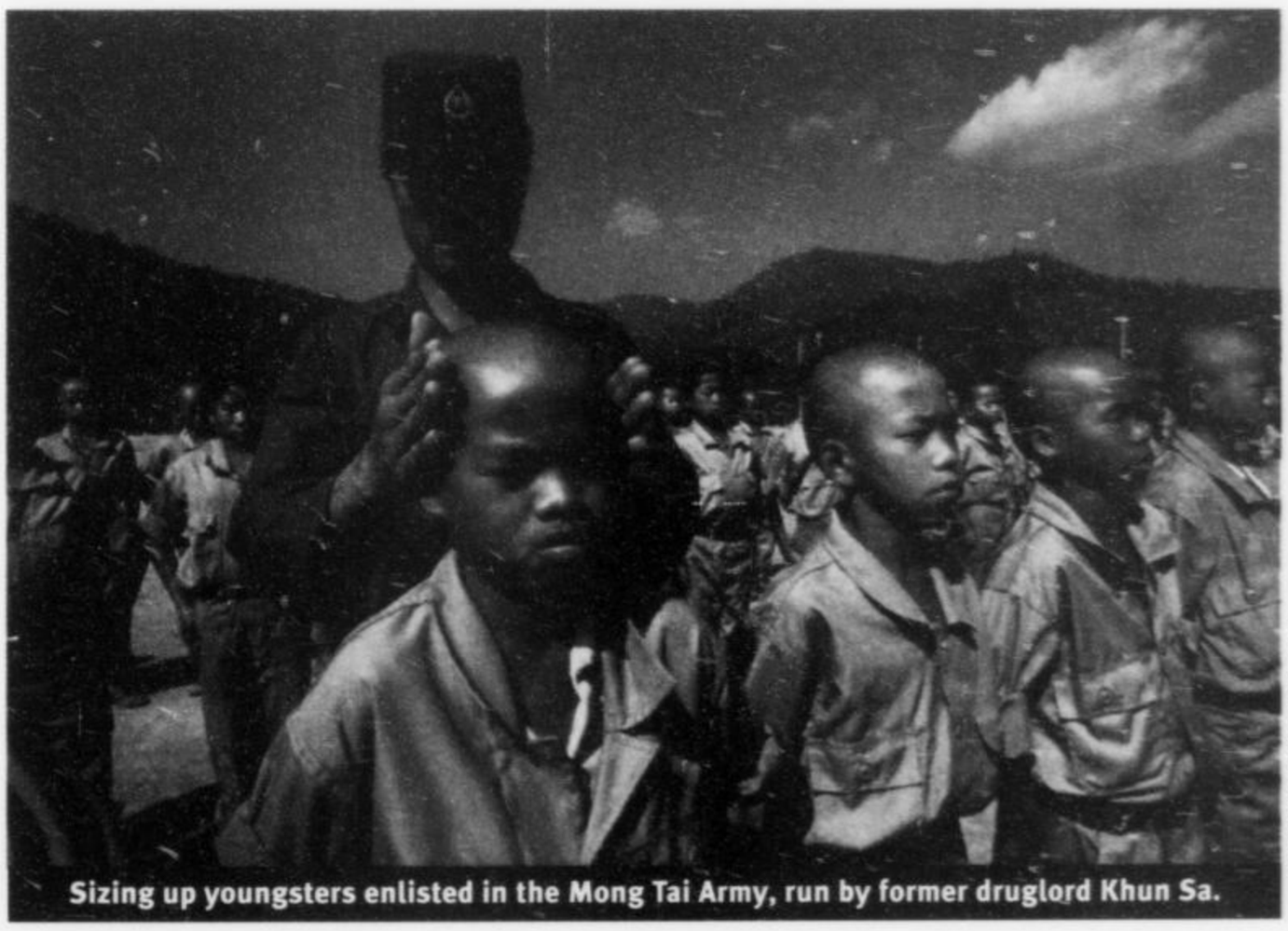
Since the 1988 uprising, the military authorities have signed ceasefire agreements with more than 20 ethnic rebel armies, which have thus been "brought into the legal fold." The level of fighting and military recruitment of children should have fallen. Yet many of the armies continue to recruit them after a ceasefire.

The worst of these offenders is the drug-running United Wa State Army (UWSA), which controls a large swathe of territory adjacent to the Chinese border. The group stopped fighting with the government after a peace agreement in 1989. Now, leaders of the group are frequent visitors to the capital, Rangoon, as well as Mandalay and other cities, where they have substantial investments in real estate, the hotel business and manufacturing. But they still seem to need an army to protect the many heroin and methamphetamine laboratories that have been established inside UWSA's territory.

According to international anti-narcotics agencies, the UWSA is the most heavily armed drug-trafficking organization in the world. More than half of this 20,000-strong army consists of children, many of them 10- or 12-years-old.

Among the ethnic armies still rebelling against the government, the Karen National Union (KNU) is known to recruit very young children and use them in combat. In early 2000, another much smaller Karen militia called "God's Army" attracted worldwide attention after they attacked a hospital in Ratchaburi, a town across Myanmar's border with Thailand.

The guerrilla force was led by two 12-year-old twin boys, Johnny and Luther Htoo, and most of their troops were other Karen children who had been orphaned in the civil war. These children have known nothing but violence since they were born. And this tragic state of affairs is likely to continue as long as Myanmar remains a war zone. ■



Sizing up youngsters enlisted in the Mong Tai Army, run by former druglord Khun Sa.

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ETHICS

The child in arms

Myanmar's protracted civil and ethnic wars have forced one of the highest number of children in the world onto the battlefield, bringing them face to face with beatings, murder and a blossoming drugs trade

Per Ler, a 13-year-old child recruited by the God's Army, a Karen militia.

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BERTIL LINTNER

SENIOR WRITER,
FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW

Brang Ja (not his real name) was only 16 when he was enlisted in the Myanmar army in 1997. But the decision wasn't his. He was on his way to visit his mother in the far north of Myanmar when the police arrested him in the city of Mandalay because he wasn't carrying any identification papers.

Two months later, military policemen visited him in jail and offered him a way out by joining the army. He agreed, fearing that he would otherwise remain in jail for years. One of the officers remarked that he was "at the best age to begin military training." But when he and other released prisoners arrived at a military training camp in the northern town of Shwebo, they found that some recruits were as young as nine. A few of them had tried to escape from the camp, but no one had succeeded.

After serving in one of Myanmar's numerous civil wars between its myriad ethnic groups, Brang Ja managed to flee through the jungle to Thailand, where he related his experiences.

Since 1988, when the military brutally suppressed a nation-wide uprising for democracy, the strength of Myanmar's armed forces has more than doubled, from about 185,000 men to 450,000 today. The officially stated goal is to build a 500,000-strong army to crush the widespread ethnic unrest and stifle any popular dissent.

Myanmar (formerly Burma) is the only country in East Asia that is expanding its military instead of reducing it. This rapid growth has been possible because children are routinely recruited. The total number of child soldiers here is difficult to estimate. But observers guess that at least 50,000 children are engaged in military activity. Many of these boys are kidnapped or forcibly conscripted into the Tatmadaw (the Burmese name for the armed forces), and about half this number serve in the private armies of various ethnic groups. The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (see interview p. 40) believes that Myanmar "rivals parts of Africa as one of the largest recruiters of child soldiers" in the world.

A 1992 document from UNICEF states that 14-year-olds are officially conscripted. Placed in military camps for training, they are called "Ye Nyunt Lunge," or "Brave Sprout Youth."

These recruits are often expected to perform the same duties as adult soldiers, and may be beaten or killed if they are not able to do so. Children are sometimes used in frontline combat or in dangerous human-wave attacks, in which hundreds have been killed. Others are used to dig trenches, cook or serve as porters carrying ammunition and supplies. According to a report entitled "No Childhood at All?" by Images Asia, an NGO based in Chiang Mai (Thailand), most child soldiers have never attended school or were pulled out after just a few years.

A "mother and father" army

"Many of us were only 14 or 15 years old," says an unnamed child soldier, quoted in the report. "There were three or four soldiers who were only 12...they couldn't carry their rifles properly, they were so small, but they had to do the same training as regular soldiers. Chiko, a 12-year-old, served as an attendant to a corporal. One day, he was beaten up really badly by him and sent to hospital. He ended up blind and half-paralyzed from it... I actually saw this beating."

Street children and orphans are particularly vulnerable and are taught that the army is their only "mother and father." The UNICEF report identified at least one military camp near Kengtung in eastern Shan state. It noted that children as young as seven were being trained and used as "porters, human shields or human mine-sweepers."

The Images Asia report is replete with examples of atrocities against Myanmar's child soldiers. Aung Tay, 14, talks about a drunk battalion commander who shot three boys while they slept because they did not obey his command to wake up. "They couldn't wake up because they had

Key Data

Population (millions):	45
Surface area (thousand sq. km.)	677
Gross national income per capita ($):	1,027
Life expectancy at birth (years)	56
Adult literacy rate (%)	84
Population below 15 years of age (% of total)	33

All data 1999. Sources: World Bank, UNDP.

been making bricks all night and were exhausted," Aung Tay says.

The report says most child soldiers have either witnessed murders or been forced to kill and plunder. During an offensive in Mawchi, Kayah state, Aye Myint and a band of boy soldiers "entered a village and shot all the villagers, because we thought of them as our enemies. We took all their pigs and chickens, all usable goods…then we burnt the village. We took all the women and raped them, and finally we murdered them."

Some child soldiers join the army willingly to protect their families from the army or to provide a much-needed income. These perceived "benefits" are rarely realized, especially when child soldiers are stationed far from their own villages. Child recruits are underpaid or not paid at all due to rampant corruption in the military. "They are forced to grow up too quickly," says Ma Mi Suu Pwint, a female soldier in a resistance militia (All-Burma Students' Democratic Front), quoted in the report.

"I joined the military in 1993, when I was 16," says Tai Ling Aung, a fisherman's son, quoted in the report. "My family was very poor and I had to join the Tatmadaw to support them."

The plight of Myanmar's children has been highlighted in recent reports by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. The lack of educational opportunities for young recruits only compounds the grave economic and social problems affecting the country.

Since Myanmar's independence from Britain in 1948, several of the country's ethnic minorities, who make up an estimated 40 percent of the population, have been fighting for autonomy or outright separation. This tragedy is seen as the main reason why Myanmar, a country with no real external enemies, began to build up a strong army as early as the 1950s. In 1962, the army seized direct power over the state in a coup d'état and began to rule by decree, abolishing Myanmar's fragile parliamentary system. The military also introduced a disastrous policy called "The Burmese Way to Socialism," which turned what had once been one of Asia's most prosperous countries into a political and economic wreck.

A narcotics militia

Annual resolutions by the United Nations urging the military to open a dialogue with the opposition have produced few tangible results, despite recent efforts by the UN's special envoy to Myanmar, Razali Ismail.

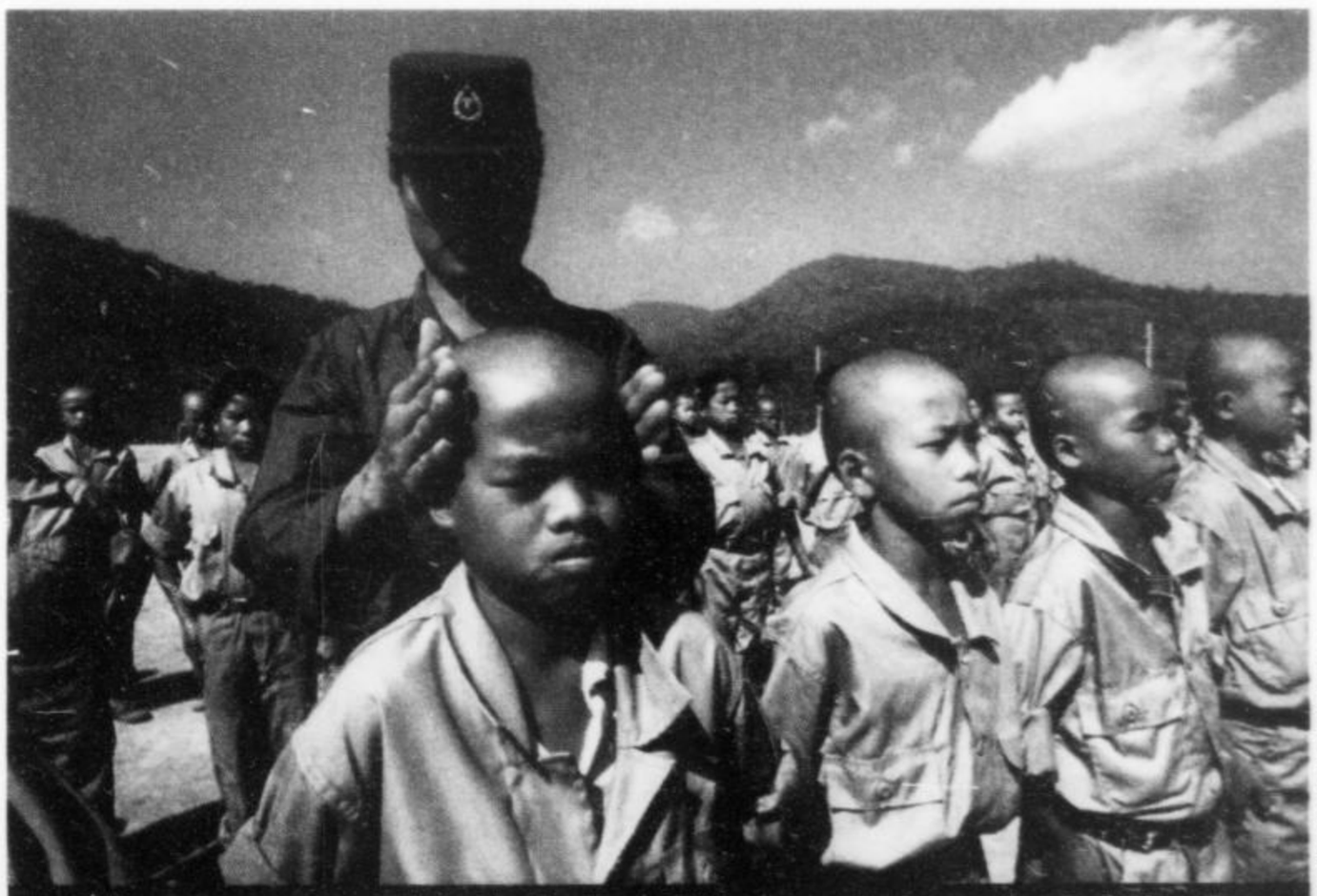
Since the 1988 uprising, the military authorities have signed ceasefire agreements with more than 20 ethnic rebel armies, which have thus been "brought into the legal fold." The level of fighting and military recruitment of children should have fallen. Yet many of the armies continue to recruit them after a ceasefire.

The worst of these offenders is the drug-running United Wa State Army (UWSA), which controls a large swathe of territory adjacent to the Chinese border. The group stopped fighting with the government after a peace agreement in 1989. Now, leaders of the group are frequent visitors to the capital, Rangoon, as well as Mandalay and other cities, where they have substantial investments in real estate, the hotel business and manufacturing. But they still seem to need an army to protect the many heroin and methamphetamine laboratories that have been established inside UWSA's territory.

According to international anti-narcotics agencies, the UWSA is the most heavily armed drug-trafficking organization in the world. More than half of this 20,000-strong army consists of children, many of them 10- or 12-years-old.

Among the ethnic armies still rebelling against the government, the Karen National Union (KNU) is known to recruit very young children and use them in combat. In early 2000, another much smaller Karen militia called "God's Army" attracted worldwide attention after they attacked a hospital in Ratchaburi, a town across Myanmar's border with Thailand.

The guerrilla force was led by two 12-year-old twin boys, Johnny and Luther Htoo, and most of their troops were other Karen children who had been orphaned in the civil war. These children have known nothing but violence since they were born. And this tragic state of affairs is likely to continue as long as Myanmar remains a war zone. ■



Sizing up youngsters enlisted in the Mong Tai Army, run by former druglord Khun Sa.

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THE CHILD IN ARMS

Converting the cannon fodder

Jo Becker of Human Rights Watch, one of the authors of a seminal report on child soldiers, explains why their rehabilitation is crucial to building peace. The best programmes judiciously combine modern child psychology with traditional rituals

INTERVIEW BY SHIRAZ SIDHVA

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

How many child soldiers are there?

More than 300,000 children under 18 are fighting as soldiers with government armed forces and rebel groups in 41 countries worldwide. Additionally, thousands of under-18s stand ready for combat in 87 countries. While most child soldiers are 15 to 18, the youngest age recorded is seven.

Are children recruited because there is a shortage of adult soldiers? Or is this a more deadly form of child labour?

The more protracted the conflict, the more likely children will participate. Children are cheap, more gullible, and easier to condition into fearless killing and unthinking obedience than adults are. We've heard stories of children who have rushed into gunfire, not realizing that the bullets could kill them. During the border war with Eritrea in 1999-2000, Ethiopian government forces reportedly press-ganged [forcibly recruited] thousands of students from marketplaces and villages, some of whom were used in human wave attacks across minefields.

What pushes children into combat?

Many who have experienced or witnessed abuse by state authorities join to feel secure or to protect and feed their families, which rarely works. Ethnic and indigenous children are often targeted, as in Guatemala during the civil war. They are also trafficked across borders—children from Rwanda and Uganda have fought in the Democratic Republic of Congo, while Pakistani children have been used in Afghanistan.

The rebel Tamil Tigers group has used girls as suicide bombers in Sri Lanka because they are less likely to arouse suspicion. Do you know of any similar examples of female recruitment?

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A training session in Russia, one of the countries that enlists under-18s.

Significantly more boys are recruited, but in some conflicts, as many as a third of the child soldiers are girls. They have been abducted in large numbers in northern Uganda and Sierra Leone by resistance groups and used for combat duties and as sexual slaves. They were also used in El Salvador during the civil war.

What is the impact of soldiering on children? Besides the obvious physical risk, do they ever get over the psychological trauma?

The impact is dramatic. I've spoken to former child soldiers who have flashbacks and nightmares about their combat experiences, and get nervous simply being approached from behind. They are always on the alert, ready for an attack. Children have been through years of military experience, but don't know how to read and write, and have no skills that can be used in a civilian economy.

What can be done to ensure that these children aren't written off even though they are generally illiterate and have no job skills?

If they have support and are given a second chance at education or vocational training, they can become very successful members of society. It's important to have long-term programmes in place. In Liberia, there was a very rapid demobilization of child soldiers followed by very few rehabilitation programmes, so many children ended up being re-recruited or joined criminal gangs. In other places like Angola or Sierra Leone, conflicts erupt again.

Ongoing programmes have worked well in Mozambique and in northern Uganda. The best ones involve the community and combine modern psychology and child development with traditional custom and ritual. This could involve the use of cleansing rituals to help children feel that they are putting their war experiences behind them. In Mozambique and Sierra Leone, children visited families of individuals they had harmed or killed and contributed labour or built schools as restitution. Donors are committing more resources to this critical area of peace-building, but a more consistent commitment is needed if this problem is to be effectively addressed. ■

Global Report on Child Soldiers, 2001.
www.child-soldiers.org

Preserving the magic

We can be swept away by a traditional wedding dance or entranced by the poets of a vanishing language—but defining this intangible cultural heritage is far from simple, as UNESCO's efforts to safeguard endangered masterpieces go to show

RICHARD KURIN

DIRECTOR OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION CENTER FOR FOLKLIFE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Traditional Kunqu opera of China, Nôgaku theatre of Japan, Kutiyattam dance in India. Men's polyphonic choral singing from Georgia. The ancient knowledge of crafting Lithuanian wooden and metal crosses. The Niagassola Sosso Bala musical tradition of Guinea. In a new programme, UNESCO proclaims these, among others, "masterpieces of intangible cultural heritage."

Intangible cultural heritage is a technical term used by experts, not by shamans or musicians. It generally refers to immaterial aspects of culture—ephemeral products like stories and language itself, as well as to the beliefs, values, and forms of knowledge and skill that give cultures their vitality. This heritage can, for example, include wedding dances and funeral laments, artisans' skills and orally conveyed knowledge of farming.

It can even include festivals and spaces where people gather, such as the wondrous Djamaa el-Fna square in Marrakesh. You might find its traces in a museum—plants used by a traditional healer, for example—but it is mostly the living, oral tradition of a people. It is *not* culture under glass!

The hill of crosses in Lithuania, where cross crafting is a longtime tradition.

Japan's living national treasures

Scholars have long recognized the intangibility of culture. In the 18th and 19th centuries philologists, folklorists and others tried to document the world's oral traditions. Yet the term "intangible cultural heritage" is relatively recent. In 1950, Japan initiated a living national treasures programme to recognize the great skills of masters of the traditional arts.

Similar programmes began in Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, the United States and France. Intangible heritage is seen as an asset or resource to be protected, appreciated, utilized and managed—an idea traceable back to the Meiji period. In the West, meanwhile, jurists recognized the idea of intellectual property as an asset, defining copyright and patent as putting an idea into material form. But collective, cultural creation that was unwritten or unrecorded remained problematic—it still does.

In the 1970s, discussion of UNESCO's World Heritage List, which later came to include natural landscapes, stimulated ▶

broader thinking about the need to safeguard intangible cultural heritage. Meetings of experts ensued, recommendations were developed and the technical discussions continued until they reached a pinnacle in May 2001, when UNESCO's Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura proclaimed the first 19 Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

How to weigh the worth of one language against another—by the number of speakers, its role in history, the beauty of its poetry?

Why so long for this concept to make it into international consciousness? Well, for one, it has suffered the problem of vagueness long associated with the term "culture." "Heritage" and "intangible" just compound the difficulty. Second, there's a terminology problem—what to call it? It is hard to imagine the term "intangible cultural heritage" sliding off the tongue of any laureates.

Vagueness and terminology aside, interest in the subject has grown with public awareness of globalization. On the macro-level, cultural resources, in a similar way to natural resources, seem to be endangered or disappearing. Of more than 6,000 languages still spoken on the planet, linguists predict that 50 to 95 percent will not last through the next century. The great majority are not written and lack any tangible form. When a language dies, there is a startling loss of knowledge and expression accumulated over generations.

On the micro-level, many people do not want to accept a social universe of homogenized global consumers bereft of ancestors, stories, and meaningful experiences. Local cultural reassertion is a way of saying, "my world may have become bigger, but I still have a place within it." In less benign circumstances, intangible cultural heritage has captured the world's attention when conflict over the practice of religions and the expression of ethnicities has turned violent.

Questions of how best to understand and respond to intangible cultural heritage sparked debate among the jury considering nominations for the UNESCO's designation as intangible "masterpieces." First, there is the question of definition. A staged performance of an ancient play may have many tangible elements—written scripts, a temple theatre and elaborately crafted costumes. Yet does the fact that it is a performance render the tradition intangible? How long does the cultural practice have to be around before it is called tradition? Does it have to be widely shared among a people? If people alter their practice to respond to changing circumstances, should the tradition be seen as a successful adaptation to be treasured or as a deprived derivative to be shunned?

As hard as it may be to define this heritage, the question of its value looms larger. To some extent, every language is a masterpiece. How to weigh the worth of one language against another in determining value and significance—by the number of speakers, its role in history, the beauty of its poetry?

But perhaps more difficult is the question of if and how to preserve the wide range of this heritage. Is it more important to safeguard vanishing or fragile traditions than popular, vital ones? To preserve the tradition, it is necessary to preserve the ability of people to practise it. We might like the look or sound of the tradition, but its continued practice would condemn people to labour with low pay and terrible conditions.

The strategies used also spark debate. In some cases, intangible cultural heritage may be viewed as a national treasure meriting government support, tax breaks, or subsidies.

Looming dangers

This can be positive, but it can also turn a practice controlled by the community into an institution controlled by bureaucrats. In other cases, a ritual celebration may be seen as an under-exploited asset prompting commercial investment. This may bring funding support, but it may also destroy the very meaning of the tradition, turning it into an activity staged for tourists. The very recognition of the value of intangible cultural resources can initiate or exacerbate conflicts—people within the society fighting for control over the tradition, people from the outside affecting the power balance within. Importantly, there is the question of what is being preserved—is it the tradition itself as product (for example, the song), is it the documentary record of the tradition (the recording), or the people (singers) and process (the singing)?

Finally, there is the issue of who decides. Nations belonging to UNESCO must nominate those cultural traditions for consideration as treasures. Many nominations may be put forth with the best intentions, but some might reflect narrow interests of a group in power. Some minority traditions may be overlooked or even censored from consideration. Given that many folk traditions arise as forms of resistance to national domination, the idea of national nomination may be flawed.

As member of the jury and an anthropologist, I was skeptical about the ability to define and select intangible cultural treasures and address the many questions that could be raised about the concept and its applicability. I still have my doubts about the particulars. They will surely be refined as UNESCO's programme evolves.

A ritual celebration may be seen as an under-exploited asset, prompting commercial investment...and turning it into a activity staged for tourists.

But I must say that I was impressed with UNESCO's selection of the first 19 "masterpieces." One could take heart that in the age of globalization, local cultures have survived, and sometimes even flourished. One would appreciate that in an age of constant innovation, tradition had some lasting value. The power and tenacity of the selected traditions and their practitioners was palpable. One can only hope that with local, national, and now international action plans in place, they will continue to inspire future generations. ■

PRESERVING THE MAGIC

A tangible debut

A new era is beginning for the 19 cultural treasures that have been declared Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO

ASBEL LÓPEZ

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

When UNESCO's Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity list was announced in Paris last May, several Spaniards dashed out of the ceremony and shouted jubilantly into mobile phones. They were letting people know that the mystery play of Elche had been proclaimed a masterpiece. The news spread like wildfire in the southern Spanish town and soon hundreds of people were out in the streets, letting off fireworks in an early start to the next day's official festivities.

Such delight might seem a bit over the top, since Elche already figures on the World Heritage List with El Palmeral, a grove of date palms planted at the time of the Arab invasion 1,000 years ago when the town was in Muslim hands. But El Palmeral doesn't move the people of Elche half as much as the "Misteri d'Elx," as it is known in the local Valencian language.

Attracting media attention

Every year, on August 14 and 15, 300 volunteers stage a play in the town's Santa Maria Basilica depicting the death, assumption and coronation of the Virgin Mary. The sacred musical drama is a part of the town's cultural and linguistic identity that has been maintained since the 15th century.

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In Bolivia, the annual Oruro Carnival features a ceremonial parade involving 20,000 dancers.

The first to appreciate a cultural treasure being put on the Intangible Heritage List are those at the heart of such masterpieces—such as the five Indians who still speak the Zápara language in the jungles of the Amazon or the storytellers of the Djamma el-Fna Square in Marrakesh (Morocco). All of them are proud the world has recognized the deepest roots of their identity.

Getting on the list can also mean an end to decades of media indifference. India has thus rediscovered the Kuttiyattam dance theatre, kept alive today by five Chakyar families in the southern part of the country. In China, the oldest and one of the most influential theatrical traditions, Kunqu, has become the talk of the town. Such treasures were recognized already, but their arrival on the list gives them "a new dimension," says Noriko Aikawa, head of UNESCO's Intangible Heritage Section. This sudden fame is the key to raising funds, getting the authorities involved and securing international help.

Getting straight with history

This has happened with the Garifuna culture in Central America, which was put on the list for its language, music and dances. The Garifuna people (known as Garinagu or Black Caribs) are descendants of rebel African slaves who live in Belize (which presented their candidacy) and along the coasts of Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

To prevent their language from dying out, teachers from Belize's National Garifuna Council went to Nicaragua to keep it alive. Roy Cayetano, Belize's deputy minister for rural development and culture, says that after the list's announcement, Nicaraguan culture ministry officials asked if they could support the project. This is important for plans to standardize Garifuna spelling, and provides valuable recognition for the 11,000 or so Garifuna scattered in 10 communities in the four countries.

UNESCO will also be funding other projects submitted by the new list members to preserve and promote such endangered cultural treasures. ■

www.unesco.org/culture/heritage/intangible

Temptation-free television for children?

Advertisers spend millions to reach children via television, but how gullible is this young audience? The debate over whether TV advertising aimed at children should be banned or regulated is in full swing

PASCALINE DUMONT

FRENCH FREELANCE JOURNALIST

In 1932, the American psychologist Edward Chace Tolman said, "Give me a child from any background and I'll turn him into anything you want—a scientist, politician or even a criminal." Although the theorist of manipulative education never achieved convincing results, today his methods are discretely emulated by big-name brands and advertising agencies that use television to try and turn children into consumers.

Children are an ideal target, simply because they are avid television viewers. A survey of seven to 12-year-olds in France and Switzerland by the newspaper *Journal de Genève* shows that they spend an average of two and a half hours in front of their sets every day. Little Germans watch less, while American children consume between four and five hours of television every day! Food, toy, clothing and record companies already invest millions of euros to win them over. In the United States, the Consumers' Union says each child sees 30,000 commercials a year.

Their behaviour shows it: they choose what they consume, insist on their favourite brands and influence their family's choices. "More than ever, children are making decisions and voicing their desires at an increasingly early age," says Claude-Yves Robin, general manager of the French children's cable television network Canal J. In an interview with the French daily *Le Monde*, Moeata Melard, a children's market specialist with the MSM Marketing Research agency, claimed that

© F. Lochon/Gamma, Paris

Talking straight to children, who increasingly choose what they consume.

"over half" of innovations such as electronic games, CD-Roms and multimedia products "reach households through children." In more than 50 percent of families, parents are said to agree to their offspring's requests simply to avoid an argument.

Children's exposure to television advertising is hardly a new debate. "Many studies have shown that children under eight cannot tell the difference between a programme and a commercial," reports the American Academy of Pediatrics, which has taken a clear stance: "We consider that advertising aimed at children is deceptive." In the U.S., many psychologists criticize advertisers' methods, arguing that they sometimes border on mind control.

Just one-third of the European Union's member states have passed laws in the framework of the Television without Frontiers directive (see box), but most of them are quite loose. Sweden is the only one that has adopted strict regulations.

A hard sell for the Swedish model

Erling Bjürstrom, a communications professor whose research was used to draft the law, says that children under 10 are incapable of telling the difference between a commercial and a programme, and cannot understand the purpose of a commercial until the age of 12. In light of those findings, Sweden banned all advertising during children's prime time in 1991, when private networks started broadcasting. Furthermore, commercials featuring characters children are familiar with are prohibited until 9 p.m. during the week and 10 p.m. on weekends.

Standing by its policy, Sweden would like other European countries to follow suit. In May 2001, when her country held the rotating European Union presidency, Culture Minister Marita Ulvskog held a conference on the issue with her European counterparts. The debate is timely because the Television without Frontiers directive is up for revision in 2002. Several states—Greece and Portugal in the south, Great Britain, Denmark and the Netherlands in the north—have already come out in favour of strengthening European regulations, while the others are satisfied with the status quo, which lets each country decide on its own measures.

Since the item is on the European Union agenda, communication professionals have been girding themselves for battle. Their first argument is globalization. "Nothing will keep thematic networks from broadcasting advertising aimed at children," says Robert Gerson, the former head in France of Mattel, which makes, among other things, Barbie dolls. The exponential growth of satellite multi-channel packages in Europe, a powerful springboard for American networks such as MTV, Disney Channel and Nickelodeon, would make it impossible to enforce such a Europe-wide ban. In Sweden, TV3 and Kanal 5, two private networks broadcasting from Great Britain, simply operate outside the law.

The second line of defence is that bombarding children with advertising is harmless. The Advertising Education Forum—an organization whose board of directors includes advertisers, broadcasters and communication consulting agencies—has just published the findings of a survey of 5,000 parents in 20 European countries. Some 85 percent of those polled said that advertising has little or no effect on their offspring.

In the past few years, Jeffrey Goldstein, a researcher in the communications department at the University of Utrecht (the Netherlands), has conducted four surveys for the European Commission in Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands and Great Britain. "There is no convincing proof," he wrote, "that advertising affects children's values, eating habits, smoking and consumption of alcohol... Children are more influenced by their parents and playmates than the media." And he concludes that "people exaggerate the power of advertising simply because it is omnipresent."

In May, the Swedish culture minister (centre) rallies support at an EU meeting.

© Bertil Ericson/STF/AFP, Paris

Bringing up critical consumers

Goldstein has just completed a separate report for the European Commission as part of its revision of the Television without Frontiers directive. "He appeals to advertisers' sense of responsibility," says Daniel Aboaf, vice-president of the European Toy Industry (ETI), a manufacturers' organization. "Self-regulation based on simple guidelines is better than prohibitive measures."

To prove that their influence on children is weak, advertisers also stress the price argument. They claim it costs three times less to reach a child than an adult through advertising. The new generation is more diverse, thus harder to target and create brand loyalty. Although they are influenced by whatever's new, advertisers claim it's more difficult to capture their attention. In a study requested by the European Commission, Reinhold Bergler, a university professor in Bonn, ▶

Television without Frontiers

The Television without Frontiers directive, adopted on October 3, 1989 and modified in 1997, was designed to standardize the legal framework for television networks in the European Union. One of its clauses says that television advertising must not directly entice minors to buy by taking advantage of their inexperience and gullibility. Member states have the leeway to enforce this guideline as they see fit. Sweden bans children's advertising on television altogether, whereas Luxembourg and Belgium prohibit it five minutes before and after children's programmes. In Italy, commercials may not interrupt cartoons, and in Denmark an agreement between the government and the private TV2 network restricts children's advertising. ■

shows that 33.6 percent of children under six express scepticism with regard to advertising's credibility.

Defenders of the status quo, then, argue that despite the substantial amounts of money poured into advertising that targets children, it has little effect on them. Pushing the paradox further, they emphasize that children have a strong critical sense. And a sense of responsibility. Rather than deprive them of advertising, it would be better to teach them how to watch it. "It's up to parents and teachers to teach children the realities of the commercial world. Just like they teach them how to cross the street," says the British magazine *The Economist*.

Bound by money

Television networks and producers have also taken sides in the debate, pointing out that children's advertising creates jobs. In the European Union, revenues from this business have reached between 670 million to one billion euros ($620 and $930 million) a year. In countries that have imposed quotas to encourage the development of home-grown entertainment, that income finances domestically-produced shows and curbs imports of series and cartoons from the United States and Japan. France, for example, is now the world's third-leading producer of cartoon series. But with just 300 hours, that country is still far behind the two world leaders.

But regardless of whether one prefers European series to their foreign counterparts for reasons of style or culture, their purpose remains the same. Whenever advertising finances programming, the main aim is to attract an audience, preferably a specific one, towards the product. Television and business are unabashed about their incestuous relationship. As soon as a series is successful, the characters are licensed to sweet-makers, fast food chains and service stations, which duplicate them *ad nauseaum*. A case in point is the Japanese series *Pokemon*.

"Any prohibition or additional restrictions on children's advertising in Europe would have a devastating effect on television production," says Cindy Rose, a lobbyist for the Walt Disney group in Brussels. Her concern is not limited to defending artistic creation and the jobs that go with it. In addition to selling programmes to television networks, the Eurodisney park, movies and countless derivative products also fuel the company's prosperity in Europe. Production and advertising feed off one another.

Companies in the classroom

Whatever their future on television networks, advertisers are already active in other areas. The increased presence of companies in schools is a worrisome trend for many childhood specialists. Fast food, soda, sports shoe and clothing brands do more than distribute samples and advertising kits with the quiet complicity of teachers. "Product managers think that each cafeteria, each classroom...is a serious opportunity to chase after whatever's cool," writes Naomi Klein in *No Logo* (Picador, 2000). The government in Britain has had no qualms about asking private companies to rescue public schools with dwindling resources.

Even in this area, television plays a role. In the United States, the private Channel One network, which broadcasts educational programmes to an estimated eight million children in 12,000 schools, charges advertisers twice as much as general interest networks. The paradise of childhood is green, the colour of the dollar. ■

© Mohamed Lounes/Gamma, Paris

Children are a prime influence on household purchases of multimedia products.

Adam Michnik: The Sisyphus of democracy

© Gazeta/Agence Vu, Paris

Whether as a dissident or editor-in-chief of Poland's leading daily newspaper, Adam Michnik has never ceased to stir up debate. How does he see democracy in Europe, over a decade after the fall of the Soviet empire?

After the coming to power in 1989 of the Eastern Bloc's first non-communist government since World War II, Poland was quick to learn the game of democracy.

Twelve years after the "Velvet Revolution," most of Central and Eastern European countries are democracies. But democracy here is ailing. First, because our democratic structures are young, weak, lacking in tradition or a political culture. But also because western democracy is ailing. In both places, corruption is inherent to the system. In the Polish, Czech, Hungarian and Slovak democracies, this scourge has happened on a more serious scale than in western countries, ▶

© Chip Hirer/Gamma, Paris

"Democracy does not claim infallibility. Weapons can be replaced by arguments"

where democracy has struck deeper roots. But the nature of the problem is the same. And corruption remains the overriding challenge to the democratic order.

Was it this "normality" of a western-style democracy that you aspired to when you were in the underground opposition?

Not really! But all is not lost! Thank God we have a free press. We can expose a scandal every day. It's a complex struggle. But when all is said and done, I would rather suffer corruption in democracy than corruption in dictatorship. Our role at the *Gazeta*, where I'm editor in chief, is, of course, to defend freedom and truth, but also to exercise the power of the press. We keep a close eye on the government. We fuel the debate on democratic values, national traditions, the legacy of history, tolerance. We also think of the excluded: the poor, religious and ethnic minorities. For us, working at the *Gazeta* is a way of pursuing what we did in the democratic opposition during communism.

Once, the dissidents of Central and Eastern Europe made their voices heard in the West. This is no longer the case.

Because our fight has become an everyday struggle! We're no longer talking about the "final reckoning." During the dictatorship, the main difference between us and revolutionary movements was that we, the anti-communist opposition, did not harbour any illusions about the "utopia of a perfect society."

Personally, I believe in *The Unperfect Society*, to borrow the title of a book by Milovan Djilas. That's why I don't feel any great disillusion. Maybe you idealists in the West do! But Western intellectuals have made a specialty of placing their hopes in the Viet Cong, Fidel Castro, Mao Zedong, the Soviet Union, the Sandinistas of Nicaragua and I don't know what else. Our movement—that of Czechoslovakia's Vaclav Havel, Russia's Andreï Sakharov, Solidarity—did not strive for utopia. What we wanted was a return to "normality." Of course, we idealized western democracy. Today we're more familiar with the system and its weaknesses. But that hasn't kept us from fighting, in the moral sense of the term, against corruption, unemployment and poverty, and for the construction of a fairer system. But one specific feature of that struggle is that it will never be over. It is endless, like Sisyphus in hell, constantly pushing his huge boulder up to an unreachable hilltop.

You often sing the praises of grey...

The world of dictatorship was in black and white. It was a struggle between Good and Evil, between total Truth versus absolute Lies. You had to be an idiot or a hoodlum to dare be against it. Democracy is qualitatively different. It's a world of clashing viewpoints, fragmentary and conflicting interests where the overriding colour is grey. It's an endless search for compromise, eternal imperfection... Democracy does not claim infallibility. Weapons can be replaced by arguments. It's an alternative to civil war. In that sense, the Basques' terrorist attacks against the Spanish state, which is a perfectly democratic state, are unacceptable.

Twenty years ago, on December 13, 1981, General Jaruzelski declared martial law. You and thousands of other people were arrested. What gave you the courage to act and keep on going?

For my generation, the road to freedom began in 1968. While students in Paris and Berkeley were rejecting bourgeois democracy, we in Prague or Warsaw were fighting for a freedom that only the bourgeois order could guarantee. In appearance, everything divided us.

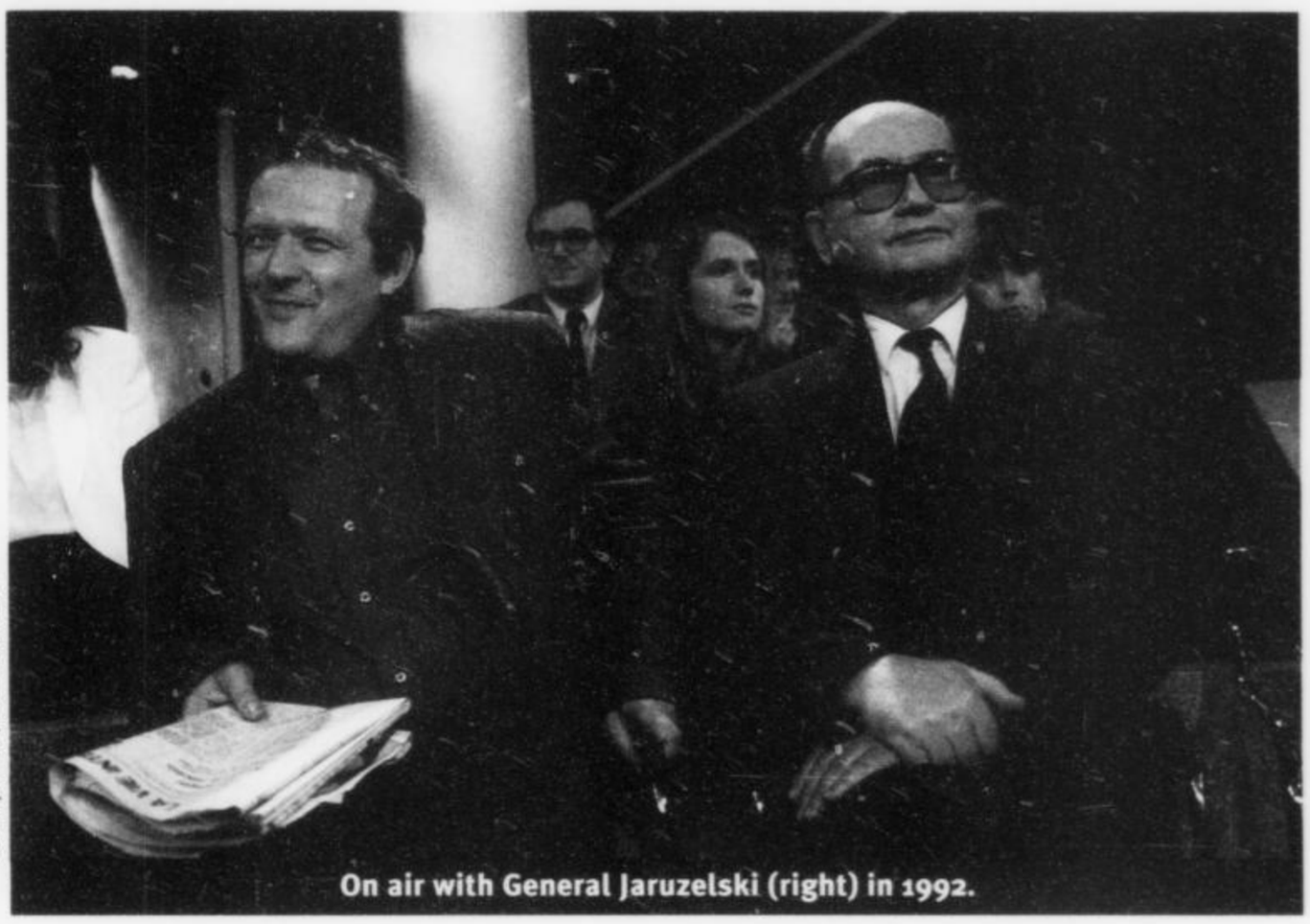
But something brought us together: the need to rebel stemming from the conviction that, as long as the world is the way it is, it's worth not dying a peaceful death in your bed. Here, we were the first generation able to build projects for the future and those projects were not groundless, as subsequent events showed. The situation did change after a few years. Many factors came into play at the same time. Poland was going through a deep economic crisis. The changes taking place in the Soviet Union also had an

A THOUGHTFUL INSURGENT

From inside his feverish lookout, a tiny office cluttered with paper in Warsaw, Adam Michnik, 54, has never stopped being a dissident. With his fine, acerbic writing, he opposes populism and criticizes Catholics seeking to set up a new moral order. And he does it with humour. His newspaper has become Poland's leading daily because, he says, "I haven't managed to drive it completely into bankruptcy."

In 1989, he founded *Gazeta Wyborcza* ("Electoral Gazette"), "the first free daily between the Elbe and Vladivostok," to support the independent trade union Solidarity during the first free elections in the history of the communist bloc. The Berlin Wall was still standing. Right from the start, the newspaper declared its independence from political movements and trends. Michnik, who was elected to parliament, advocated "shock therapy" for Poland—a radical overhaul of the economy—and urged everyone to take part in building democracy. That is when he parted ways with Lech Walesa, the historic leader of Solidarity and future president.

For Michnik, thought and insurrection have always gone together. He was a student leader in 1968, a co-founder of the KOR (Workers' Defence Committee) and an adviser to Solidarity. Altogether, he spent six years behind bars. His struggle and achievements have earned him many rewards. ■



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On air with General Jaruzelski (right) in 1992.

impact. Lastly, the communist *nomenklatura* itself was evolving, becoming more pragmatic. It was the end of the utopian dream, and it enabled us to dismantle the dictatorship by negotiation. The "round table" [negotiations between the government, the opposition and the Church in 1989] was our great contribution to 20th-century history! Admit that it is extremely rare to see opposition forces and leaders of the dictatorship—put another way, prisoners and their guards—sitting down at the same table to negotiate a decolonization and democratization pact. That did not happen in Franco's Spain, Honecker's East Germany, Pinochet's Chile or even in Kadar's Hungary.

Talking together to bring a country out of dictatorship is a good way to learn about democratic compromise.

Today in Poland, no political force openly contests the democratic order. When they're in power, it's clear for all the parties, whether they're post-communist, right-wing or centre-right, that democracy is a stable, reassuring system.

Often after a period of dictatorship, a free press is tempted to settle scores and take some kind of revenge. Did that happen in Poland?

We played our role and helped to shed light on some of the dictatorship's criminal secrets. But our philosophy is just the opposite of the spirit of revenge. We're for reconciliation, because it's impossible to take a step ahead when you're looking back. To move from dictatorship to democracy, we campaigned for compromise and national reconciliation: with neither reprisals, nor winners and losers. Reform in Poland would have been impossible without that social consensus, without dialogue and compromise. The way I see it, "decommunization," discrimination against former civil servants or party activists, would have been anti-democratic. On the other hand, we wanted the truth to come out, and felt that task was up to historians and journalists, rather than prosecutors and police officers. Amnesty doesn't mean amnesia.

Is that why you wanted to broach a dialogue with General Jaruzelski?

I wanted to behave like a normal human being in a free country: I had been his unrelenting opponent, his prisoner, but I was interested in what he had to say. He's an intelligent man and Poland's roads to freedom sometimes took very different courses. Some went through prison, others through the corridors of power. Deep down, I'm ▶

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"The old split between left and right ended with the anti-communist revolution"

convinced Jaruzelski is a Polish patriot and a partisan of democracy. He's not a cynic. He didn't want to turn communism into a rampaging chauvinism, like Serbia's Milosevic or Croatia's Tudjman, who ripped the Balkans apart in the 1990s. He didn't want to build his own identity by stirring up hatred among others, those who belong to a different ethnic group, religion or class. No. I'm sure he always wanted to build a non-ethnic, secular Poland. That is very similar to what we've always stood for at the *Gazeta*: a state for all citizens.

We must reject one camp's domination over another, with endless settlings of scores. Our country must make room for everybody. That's the only way to build a sovereign, democratic state.

Soon Poland will join the European Union. But Europe is in crisis, and has botched reforms considered necessary to expand and integrate newcomers.

The debates in the European Union pit two fundamentally different views against each other: the idea of a Europe of Nations defended by de Gaulle [president of France from 1959 to 1969], and the notion of a federal Europe of regions that Denis de Rougemont[1] put forward in his book *Open letter to Europeans*. I and the people of my generation are closest to the Gaullist position. Each nation's culture has something sacred about it in its heart. And for my generation, that sacred something is independence. We have a hard time letting go of that. Although we're told it's worth the sacrifice, our emotions stand in the way. More generally, the fall of communism has led to a thaw in Western Europe. Beneath the ice, we have seen both flowers and signs of decay appear: crises that jeopardize the cohesiveness of states and of Europe.

Western democracies are facing other problems, such as the weakening of traditional intermediaries—trade unions, political parties—between government and the people. It's as though heads of state now find themselves alone in front of television and its omnipotence.

We're seeing the same phenomenon in Poland and don't have any solutions to fight it. It strengthens politicians' temptation to offer populist recipes, and we're afraid of being swept away by this groundswell. But it goes further than the simple perverse effect of television or the triumph of a certain nihilism. Politics itself is undergoing an upheaval. The old split between left and right has had its day. That rift, which was created by the French Revolution, came to an end with the anti-communist revolution. Today, the new fault line runs between those who defend the idea of an open, multicultural society based on human rights and the rights of citizens, and those who are rebuilding walls around a closed society, stone by stone. Whether we are talking about the Maastricht[2] treaty or NATO intervention in Kosovo, traditional political divisions no longer fit in with the new world's real needs. This can be seen with all the major issues: which Europe should be built? What should be religion's role in public life? What is the right vision of the state: an ethnic state, a religious state or the opposite, a citizens' state? What policy should be adopted towards asylum-seekers or immigration? Recently, a debate over the Jedwabne massacre has rocked Poland. A

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Michnik (left) on the campaign trail in 1989 with Lech Walesa at the Gdansk shipyards.

historian revealed that the 1,600 Jews in this village under German occupation in 1941 were slaughtered by their own neighbours. In Poland, this debate has been as violent as the Dreyfus[3] affair in France. It has deeply divided families and the country. And there again, the fault line does not run along the old rift between left and right, but between advocates of an open and a closed Poland.

The vision that everyone has of the nation in Europe has also come into play. Are we eternally innocent victims or accomplices in the subjugation of others, whether they were Ukrainians, Jews or even Germans, against whom we practised a form of ethnic cleansing after World War II. The defenders of an "eternally innocent" Poland include right-wing extremists, post-communists and bishops. It's a dangerous concept. The Serbs have always considered themselves eternal victims as well. Today they're paying the price.

"Anti-globalization" demonstrations also reflect a whole range of opinions. How do you interpret them?

What is globalization? Internet, mobile phones, open borders? I'm afraid that fear is leading new volunteers to enlist under the banner of new ideological crusades. These people say they're "pro-poor," but they are not campaigning to open up the markets of rich countries in Europe and America to products from the developing world. They're not debating reform of the IMF or the World Bank. That would be too specific, too down to earth. Like Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Joschka Fischer and Rudi Dutschke in 1968, they're fighting in the name of certain revolutionary-communist, anarchist, situationist, Maoist or Trotskyist utopias. I can understand them. But today we are well aware of these utopias' genuine nature: they're stupid. To me, the anti-globalization movement is more the symptom of a crisis of thought. ■

INTERVIEW BY PHILIPPE DEMENET

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

1. *A thinker and writer, Denis de Rougemont (1906-1985) promoted "dialogue between cultures" and supported a federal Europe.*
2. *Signed in Maastricht on February 7, 1992, implemented on January 1, 1993. The Maastricht treaty led to the creation of a single currency and strengthened the European Union's powers.*
3. *In 1894, the French officer Captain Alfred Dreyfus was arrested on false charges of espionage. The "Dreyfus affair" deeply divided France and fuelled anti-Semitism. Many intellectuals came to the defence of Dreyfus, including the writer Emile Zola, who wrote his famous article* J'Accuse.

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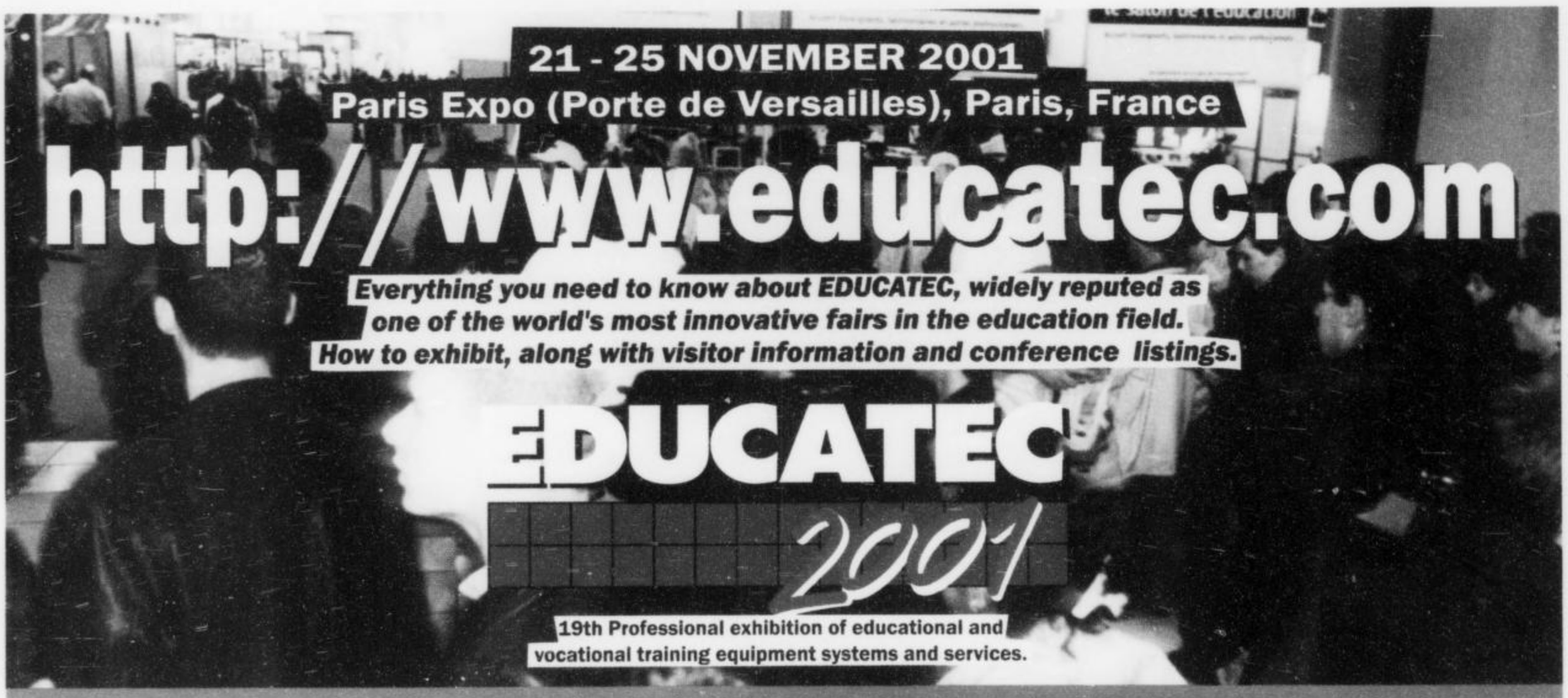
IMPRIMÉ EN FRANCE
DÉPOT LÉGAL : C1 - SEPTEMBER 2001
COMMISSION PARITAIRE N° 71844 -
Diffusé par les N.M.P.P.
The UNESCO Courier (USPS 016686) is published monthly in Paris by UNESCO. Printed in France.
Periodicals postage paid at Champlain NY and additional mailing offices.
Photocomposition and photoengraving: The UNESCO Courier.
Printing: Maulde & Renou
ISSN 0041-5278 No. 09-2001-OPI 00-592 A



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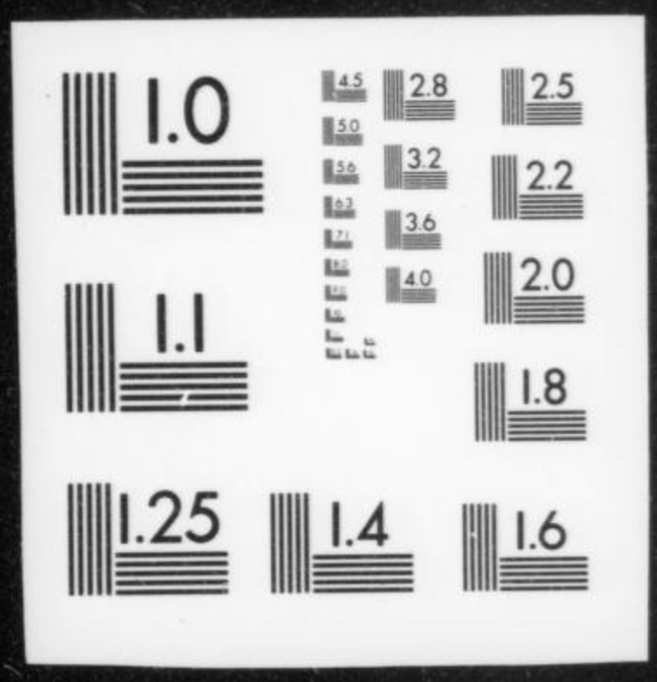
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